

THE PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE OF IRISH CATHOLIC WOMEN TEACHERS IN VICTORIA FROM 1930 – 1980

Submitted by:

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study focusses on 'The professional experience of Irish Catholic women teachers in Victoria from 1930 to 1980'. The research is based on a collection of reconstructed oral histories derived from interviews conducted with twenty-two Irish Catholic women, both lay and religious, who were primary and secondary teachers in Victoria, Australia. The professional lives reflected in these stories span from the 1930 to 1980. This study explores how Irish women teachers experienced education in Australian Catholic schools in Victoria in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, discipline, culture and religious traditions.

The twenty-two research participants were contacted through mutual acquaintances and advertisements through an Irish radio program. An outline of the research participants is provided. This study has been undertaken primarily via narrative analysis, oral history, interview and individual stories.

The professional and personal lives of the women in this research were interconnected. The nuns' sole purpose was to serve God as religious women, so their lives as teachers were more a vocation rather than a career. The lay teachers who took part in this study saw teaching primarily as a career. The experiences described by the participants defined their professional context. In particular, the journey narrative, from Ireland to Australia featured significantly in their personal accounts.

Outcomes from this research include the exploration and description of the significant role played by these women in the development of education generally and Catholic education specifically in Victoria. The research identified the personal and professional intersects in the lives of these women teachers and how faith, culture and prior experiences influenced their understanding of themselves as teachers. The research also analysed the socially disruptive lives of Irish women teachers in Victoria as they prepared children from poor working class homes for life in Victoria in the mid-twentieth century.

STUDENT DECLARATION

I, Eileen O'Shea, declare that the EdD thesis entitled "The Professional Experience of Irish Catholic Women Teachers in Victoria from 1930 to 1980" is no more than 60,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature:

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my parents, Catherine and John Connolly; my maternal grandparents, Ellen and James Noone; my paternal grandparents, Mary and John Connolly; and especially to my husband Martin, and children, Eilish, Siobhan and Gerard. Words can never express the gratitude I have for you. Without your love and support, I would not have the strength to complete this endeavour.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	I
STUDENT DECLARATION	III
DEDICATION	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	V
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	3
Professional Experience	6
CHAPTER 2: THE WORLDS MY PARTICIPANTS LIVED IN	14
The Irish in Ireland	17
The Irish in Australia	23
Dr. Daniel Mannix	27
The Great Depression	30
World War II	33
Religious Orders	33
Teaching	36
Victorian Education	37
Professional experiences of teachers	39
The Second Vatican Council	40
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	42
Qualitative research	43
Recruitment for research participants	45
Oral history and interviews	48
Interview Questions	50

Me as the researcher	53
Narrative analysis	53
Conclusion	57
CHAPTER 4: STORIES	59
‘Nothing is impossible, just believe in yourself’ - Margaret	59
Going on the Missions - Mary	67
The Adventurer - Hannah	83
Service for God alone - Ellen	94
My Story - Eileen	101
CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS	118
Gender	119
Place	124
Identity and Authority	133
Curriculum and the Classroom	135
Vatican II: being Catholic, female and a teacher	139
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS / REFLECTIONS	142
Limits of the study	153
REFERENCES	155
APPENDIX ONE	164
APPENDIX TWO	166

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study investigated the experiences of a number of women, who stood behind the edifices of Catholic education. In particular it researched the professional experiences of Irish women teachers within education in Victoria between 1930 and 1980. Ebsworth's (1973) history of the Catholic Church in the state of Victoria, Australia, provided some insight into the work carried out by Irish Catholic pioneers, who were responsible for building Catholic Churches and schools in Victoria during the 19th Century. It was noted in a review of Ebsworth's (1973) book, *Pioneer Catholic Victoria*:

The role of the Catholic Church in the field of education is traced through transitory schools in rough sheds or tents on the early diggings to the establishment of major schools and colleges (Pioneer Catholic Victoria n.d.)

This study examined a group of Irish women who contributed to the construction of the 'rough sheds' and who, with great help from parishioners, struggled on and built new and outstanding colleges both physically and metaphorically. The pioneers in this inquiry were female and Irish and have been overlooked in research studies, perhaps due to their social and cultural status. It has been suggested that religious women, who belong to Catholic Orders and spend their lives serving the Catholic Church, have been 'that most fruitful source of recruitment' from Ireland (Sturrock, 1995, p.6; Magray, 1998). They have worked tirelessly and yet have been overlooked over the years compared with, for instance the male Jesuits and Christian Brothers. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, religious women and nuns used their wealth and their authority to effect changes in both the religious practices and the daily activity of

the large Irish Catholic population. By doing so, Magray (1998) argues, the religious women deserve a far larger place in the Irish/Australian historical record than has previously been accorded. Even more invisible than women religious (McKenna, 2006) in the development of education in Australia, however, are those Irish lay women who were sponsored by Catholic Education Offices and Bishops' funds to come to Australia during the mid-twentieth century to teach in Catholic schools. Nothing has previously been written about these women. The significance therefore of this research aimed to benefit these participants by providing an opportunity to reflect on their past successes and their influence and contribution as educators in Catholic schools in Victoria from 1930 to 1980. This study gathered and preserved oral testimony from women teachers; it developed a picture of a way of life and explored the historical context of Catholic teaching in Victoria. It provided recognition of the contribution of a particular group of teachers to a sector of the schooling system in Victoria. This study therefore focussed on:

1. Investigating how Irish women teachers influenced and experienced education in Catholic schools in Victoria during the period 1930 to 1980.
2. Considering the influence of Irish Catholic women on education in Catholic schools in Victoria in the context of social and economic change
3. Examining changes in the conditions of women teachers in Catholic schools through this fifty-year period in Victoria.
4. Exploring the perception of Catholic education in Australia as articulated by Irish Catholic women teachers

As a consequence, the objectives of the research were to:

1. Collect evidence through the use of unstructured interviews, with Irish Catholic women teachers about their professional experience as teachers in Victoria from 1930 to 1980
2. Identify patterns of experience that correlate with the participants' experiences of teaching in Victoria, Australia
3. Interpret the issues/themes that emerge from the evidence collected through interviews and research

Twenty-two participants took part in this research. The participants were Irish Catholic women, some religious sisters and some lay women, who had taught in Catholic schools in Victoria between 1930 and 1980. The rationale for selecting these years was that this was a period where many changes took place in education generally, in Catholic education and within the Catholic Church itself. Moreover, the experience of these women within Catholic education during this period in Victoria was largely ignored in the research literature.

This research was conducted within a theoretical frame work that involved personal and social identity (Ashfort & Mael, 1989, p.1). They argue that:

- (a) social identification is a perception of oneness with a group of persons;
- (b) social identification stems from the categorization of individuals, the distinctiveness and prestige of the group, the salience of out groups, and the factors that traditionally are associated with group formation; and (c)
- social identification leads to activities that are congruent with the identity, support for institutions that embody the identity, stereotypical perceptions of self and others, and outcomes that traditionally are associated with group formation, and it reinforces the antecedents of identification.

Identity therefore in this context relates to an individual, as part of a group or community based on common beliefs and values and commitment to the Catholic faith.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

This study investigated how Irish women teachers influenced and experienced education in Catholic schools in Victoria in terms of the curriculum, pedagogy, discipline and culture. According to the Webster Comprehensive Dictionary Encyclopaedic Edition (1995), professional means 'connected with, preparing for, engaged in, appropriate, or conforming to a profession; of or pertaining to a special occupation' (p. 1006). Experience refers to the 'knowledge derived from one's own action, practice, perception, enjoyment, or suffering' (p. 447). In the context of this research, the participants' professional experience related to their work as teachers in Catholic schools, bringing their own personalities to the classroom, using the resources available, engaging the students in class activities and imparting knowledge to the best of their ability. Professional experience for these nuns and lay women also referred to their individual capacities in managing authority and creating their personal identities as teachers in terms of their resourcefulness, resilience and in many cases a willingness to accept whatever came their way.

Faith played a significant part in the professional experiences of many of these women. For many it was an act of faith to come to Australia. Modern Catholic theology defines faith as the 'act of the intellect when it assents to divine truth under the influence of the will moved by God through grace' (McKenzie, 1995, p. 267). For lay women the choices to be a teacher, to be Catholic and to come to Australia, were not necessarily as interwoven or interdependent as they were for many of the religious nuns. This is not to say that faith was not important for

these women, but they were more likely to come to Australia as an adventure than as an act of faith, as evidenced in their interviews.

The isolation from family was a defining part of professional experience both for the nuns and some of the lay women, as were the sacrifices they made in coming to a foreign country. Catholic teachers exist within multiple overlapping communities – the school, the church, the wider community and the community of family or religious order. Catholic teachers during this period had a role as a teacher within the community, collaborating with other teachers, using and devising the curriculum, and negotiating their relationships with superiors, church, parish priest, parents and children, and involvement in extra curricula activities.

The background to these professional experiences began with Bishop Goold who, in Australia in 1849, sent to Ireland for more priests. So 'began that steady stream of priests from Ireland which has been so fruitful in its blessings to this far-distant country' (Ebsworth 1973, p.4). Later on, as Catholic schools were established by the religious sisters (O'Kane, 1976) more Irish nuns were brought out from Ireland to teach the Australian Catholic children as the need arose. Two of the religious orders, the Brigidines and the Presentation sisters, who first arrived in Australia from Ireland in 1883 (Sturrock, 1995; Rogan, 2000) and 1866 (Consedine, 1983) respectively, are represented in this study. The Brigidine Sisters arrived in Australia in 1883 (Sturrock, 1995; Rogan, 2000) and they were very involved in education.

The Brigidine Sisters mission stated:

As Brigidines we stand in reverence for the community of life and we will continue to work to further compassion and justice for humanity and the

earth. We will work out of an educational base. We are committed to ways of working that are collaborative and just in ministry; we will adopt a pioneering and creative approach. We will work in ways that acknowledge the right of full participation of all baptized persons. We have a particular concern for women's rights and interests. We choose to develop structures that will enable us to be flexible in our approach to change, personal need and communal involvement (Brigidine Sisters, 2010).

Over almost two hundred years the Brigidine Sisters have continued to read and respond to the signs of the times, branching out to various parts of the world to work for social justice in education and ever-widening pastoral ministries (Brigidines, 2010).

The Presentation Sisters statement of belief, incorporated in part as their mission, states:

Presentation Sisters are called to encounter God in the heart of the world and to continue the mission of Jesus in the spirit of our founder Nano Nagle. Like Nano we are called to keep our hearts open to the cry of Earth and the cry of those living in poverty, voices which challenge us to conversion and action both personally and communally. Presentation Sisters acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we live. We acknowledge their deep spiritual connections to this land and we thank them for the care they have shown to Earth over thousands of years (Society of Presentation Sisters, 2012).

Another religious order represented in this study is the Josephite Order founded by an Australian, Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop. This order was very

popular with the Irish women and most of the participants joined the order at the Junior Novitiate in Newmarket, County Cork, in Ireland, before coming to Australia. The Josephites' mission states:

Josephite today means much more than vowed Sisters of St. Joseph.

Sisters encourage new voices to enter the melody. The charisma may be indefinable, but it can be recognized. First given to our Founders and the early sisters, many people like us rejoice in it today. The melody includes many who are involved in God's mission in the Josephite Spirit –

Associates, Board Directors, staff of Congregational ministries, colleagues, volunteers and committee members to name a few.

Independent organizations such as MacKillop Family Services in Melbourne now bear Mary MacKillop's name and many former Josephite schools and ministries continue to live and grow in Mary's spirit (Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart 2009).

These three religious orders were established to educate poor boys and girls. Part of understanding the professional experiences of Irish women teachers concerns the sorts of experiences that shaped their thinking. The post-colonial views of respect for the custodians of the land were not present in the 1930s - 1970s. Rather, the indigenous people were to be converted to Christianity by missionaries, by attempting 'to assimilate with their habits and win their confidence' (O'Farrell, 1985, p. 34). Shifts in thinking around topics like this are an important part of the influences of Irish women teachers, and the experiences they shared as teachers and women.

One individual who played a significant role in the formation of the participants' worlds was Archbishop Daniel Mannix. Daniel Patrick Mannix (March 4, 1864 - November 2, 1963), Irish-born Australian Catholic clergyman, Archbishop of

Melbourne for 46 years, was one of the most influential public figures in twentieth century Australia, and a powerful cleric in Australian history. He is significant within the stories explored in this research because of the power he held in determining the course of Catholic culture in Victoria through much of the first half of the twentieth century (Brennan, 1964).

Dr Daniel Mannix was born in County Cork, Ireland. He became Archbishop of Melbourne after the death of Archbishop Thomas Carr, in 1917, another Irishman from County Galway. Archbishop Mannix is well known in Australia for his outspoken reputation (Murphy, 1972) and his major achievements in making possible the education of Catholic students at tertiary level (Brennan, 1964). Mannix sought to increase the profile and status of Catholics in the wider community through education and through visibility. Great celebrations were held every year for the Irish community in Melbourne on St. Patrick's Day (Brennan, 1964), which was a Catholic holy day and a school holiday for all Catholic schools. There was a big St. Patrick's Day parade and all Catholic schools were involved with plentiful Irish music and Irish dancing in the streets.

Archbishop Mannix was influential in shaping the educational and religious worlds in which the participants in this study moved. His focus on education, and his extreme pride in all things Irish form a backdrop to the stories they tell and the schools they worked in.

From 1962 to 1965 a very important event for the Catholic Church referred to as the Second Vatican Council (McEnroy, 1996) took place. It brought about many changes in the Catholic Church throughout the world (Elliot, 2003). Pope John XXIII opened the Council on 2nd October, 1962, and Pope Paul VI brought the Council to an end on 8th December 1965.

The Council changed the liturgy of the Mass by replacing Latin with the vernacular language so that the congregation would take an active part in the Mass responses. The sacraments and the form of the Mass were simplified with the aim of making them more meaningful to those participating. The Council stipulated that moral standards should be upheld in the media, particularly in television and film (Elliot, 2003; Flannery, 1980: Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication P.C.I.S.C., *Communio et Progressio*, 29 January, 1971). The traditions of the Eastern Churches and the Roman Catholic Church should be held sacred and combined fully to make up 'the whole Church of Christ' (p. 156).

The Council also stressed that the mission for all Catholics was to spread the word of God and evangelize all communities because everyone in the Church is a missionary and 'all Catholics are called to holiness' (Elliot, 2003 p. 156). The Council gave guidance to the people of the modern world on matters relating to marriage and family life; politics; and relationships between international communities. It also stressed the importance of Ecumenism and that all baptized people should be called Christian and that Catholics should be involved with non-Catholic Christians as well as other great non-Christian world religions and show respect for these religions (Elliot, 2003).

The change brought about by involving the laity in the mission of the Catholic Church was the biggest change of all. Lay people were encouraged to take a much more active role in the Church, especially women who were not allowed inside the altar rails prior to the Second Vatican Council. Now they are allowed to do the readings at Mass, serve Holy Communion and Wine and administer at Holy Communion Services when a priest was not available. Women take part in many activities in the local parish community such as Baptism preparations,

pre-marriage courses with their husbands and teaching Sunday school to students attending State schools. Girls can now attend the priest as an altar server. It is evident that many of the concerns of the Vatican Council were to have significance for education in Catholic schools, as well as for both religious and lay women. The Council is therefore critical as an underpinning construct for understanding the experiences of the women in this study.

As a consequence of the Second Vatican Council, the circumstances of religious life altered significantly (McEnroy, 1996). Nuns were given more freedom to wear normal clothes, work in the community in a pastoral role; community activities, particularly in the evenings, resulted in less emphasis on prayer times. With this freedom came a richer knowledge of life outside the convent and more mixing with people in the outside world. Some nuns decided to change their ways and leave the order. This seldom occurred before and it brought a great upheaval to the religious orders. After being institutionalized in a convent for many years, some nuns decided to leave their orders and make it on their own. One of my participants was a nun who returned to lay life. Along with this freedom came the permission to visit their families in Ireland, starting with the oldest nuns and working its way to the latest recruits, which would have taken some time. It was after a visit to her family in Ireland that one participant decided to leave the order for good and return to her long lost family, some of whom she met for the first time on her visit there. There is further information on Vatican II in the next chapter.

In conclusion this is a summary of the content of each of the six chapters of this thesis. Chapter 1 contains the introduction to the topic, the objectives of this study and a brief background on the participants, especially the religious sisters and the religious orders to which they belong. Chapter 2 refers to a literature

review, which focusses on the background topics to this study and deals with the social history of the period. Chapter 3 is the Methodology chapter which explains how the research was carried out and how the participants were recruited for this study. Chapter 4 contains the four main stories which represent the group, as well as my own story, which has a similar journey/path to many of the participants for this study. Chapter 5 analyses the data collected from the group and Chapter 6 deals with the reflections and conclusions drawn from this study.

CHAPTER 2: THE WORLDS MY PARTICIPANTS LIVED IN

The aim of this chapter is to explore the social, economic, religious and intellectual worlds in which the participants in this study lived. It reviews literature related to the historical background to my study on the following themes: Irish in Ireland, the Irish in Australia, religious orders, the Depression, World War Two, post-war immigration and Vatican Two. This chapter also includes a review of literature related to the following themes that impacted on the professional experience of the participants in this study: Victorian education, peer teaching, Karmel Report, registering bodies, impact of Vatican Two, and major historical and cultural events and attitudes that created the worlds of the participants. Each of these had a significant impact on the professional experience of Irish Catholic women teachers in Victoria.

The discussion of life worlds is followed by a review of teaching within the Victorian education system between 1930 and 1980 which establishes the context in which the participants worked. It addresses such issues as curriculum, class management, school organisation and the role of the teacher within the school and wider community. The women in this study were educated in one country, yet taught in another, often with no bridging education or training. During the period at the beginning of this study, the idea of post-colonialism had not been articulated and educational systems had not by and large, recognised differing landscapes of learning. This had a major influence on the professional experiences of the participants, and remains a difficult experience to articulate for many.

This chapter locates the participants and their worlds within the changes resulting from the Second Vatican Council in the Catholic Church during the 1960s. These changes had a deep impact on the lives of Catholics, and particularly on the lives of the participants in this study who were members of religious orders. The Second Vatican Council brought in radical changes that challenged the core values of many Catholics and had a significant impact in Catholic schools.

Across all of these socio-cultural factors that shaped the participants' worlds, runs the theme of feminism (McKenna, 2006), the understanding of the role of women in the family, community and in social structures, and the ways in which this provided a social more within which many women struggled to be heard. This chapter discusses the removal of women as a result of becoming members of religious orders from certain societal conventions and how it contrasted with their new roles in another major societal convention: education. Catholic education in Australian society became a major priority with the large influx of Irish migrants to Australia, and thus the need to establish greater Catholic education provision. Mannix was instrumental in maintaining Irish culture, values and beliefs and also in the maintenance of faith, traditions and rituals, with a focus on teaching and learning through Catholic schools.

Religious orders, including the Brigidine, Josephite and Presentation orders of nuns, have been seen by lay women as leaders in the Catholic Church, who have had easier access to the 'hierarchical administration of the Church' and its resources than the lay women themselves (Macdonald et al, 1999, p. 30). However, it is in education that the religious sisters from these three congregations have had the most influence on society as shown by the

participants in this study. In all three orders the founders placed great importance on educating Catholic children, rich and poor alike.

Mary MacKillop and Father Tenison Woods set up a school in Penola in 1866, in South Australia which was free for all, because they believed that lack of money should not prevent Catholic children from having an education. Most of the Catholic families of Irish background in that area were poor and struggling to feed, clothe and educate their children (O'Brien, 1994, p.45). The majority of the participants in this study were Josephite Sisters, who joined the order at the novitiate in Newmarket, County Cork, Ireland before coming to Australia. They completed teacher-training in Australia and then were sent to rural areas or small towns around Victoria, usually in pairs, as pioneers to establish schools for the local Catholic community. Their plan was to first establish a school, which could also be used as a Church on Sundays. They believed that education was the first step to success in the world (O'Brien, 1994), and to creating an influential Catholic population. This philosophy is demonstrated by all three congregations.

In the same way, the major contribution of the Brigidines to the Church has been through education. According to Sturrock (1995), while the Presentation and the Dominican Sisters from Ireland in the nineteenth century were commissioned to educate the poor, 'the Brigidines were given a different charter by Daniel Delaney' (p. 14), their founder. As well as educating the poor, 'each Brigidine foundation was also to open a 'select' fee-paying school which provided for the Sisters' own livelihood' (p. 14). The Brigidines travelled from town to town throughout Victoria setting up schools wherever there was a need, some of them boarding schools to cater for the rural students. The nuns worked

very hard, putting in long hours with the explicit aim of helping students obtain scholarships to secondary schools, which hopefully led to successful lives.

Some Presentation nuns in this study also reflected this desire for their students to succeed at school. These Presentation sisters often went into rural towns and like the members of other orders, acted without question when asked to take on responsibilities such as principal of a school in their twenties. These religious orders 'became a bountiful source of volunteers' for the Catholic schools in Australia (O'Donoghue, 2001).

THE IRISH IN IRELAND

As a group, the Irish in Australia includes the study participants, many of the families with whom they worked, the Irish diaspora, and, in many cases, the local priest. Most of the women in this study came initially to Australia as members of religious orders with a missionary zeal. Understanding the structures that underlay these orders provides an insight into the social constructs in which these women felt comfortable, or against which they rebelled.

The socio-political situation in Ireland and the social mores that existed there created a favourable environment for immigration from Ireland to Australia in the latter part of the 19th and 20th centuries (O'Brien & Travers, 1991; O'Farrell, 2000; McKenna, 2006). In particular, poverty, attitudes to marriage and the perceived role of women were push factors for the Irish women who came to Australia, as they were dissatisfied 'with their lot' (McKenna, 2006, p.31) and they left Ireland for a healthier life abroad. Other Irish women especially some of the participants in this study were keen to go 'on the missions' after visiting Irish missionaries gave lectures about their lives in foreign lands, helping the poor, for example, in Africa (McKenna, 2006). The Irish in Australia established a

different set of social values: for example 'economic success and social mobility were possible' (O'Brien & Travers, 1991, p.240) for the Irish in Ireland (Cleary, 1933; O'Brien & Travers, 1991; McClaughlin, 1998; O'Farrell, 2000), while maintaining certain religious principles that the women in this study valued and identified with.

There has been little written about the role of women and their seminal work (Magray, 1998). By the start of the twentieth century, women had been powerful in establishing and maintaining values in Irish society over many generations, although not always in ways that have been acknowledged. In particular, women expressed their values by joining religious orders. During the eighteenth century, a group of Irish Catholic landowners became prominent in the east and south of Ireland brought about by 'surplus wealth produced by the widespread agricultural boom of the 1740s to the 1810s. (Magray, 1998 p.5). Wealthy farmers and rich commercial and professional Catholics in Munster and Leinster challenged 'the political, social, and religious dominance of the Protestant ascendancy' (Magray, p.5). Several women from this middle class were the founders of 'women's orders' during this period. New congregations sprung up all over the country before the famine in the middle of the nineteenth century, devastated the Irish people in Ireland. The women who joined these new convents were mainly from the middle class and they brought with them 'the goals and the responsibilities of their class' (Magray, p 128). They used their wealth and authority to effect changes in both the religious practices and daily activity of the larger Irish Catholic population. Magray argues that in doing so, they deserved a far larger place in the Irish historical record than they have been accorded. Often well-educated, articulate, and evangelical, the nuns were much more social and ambitious than traditional stereotypical views have

indicated. The women, who established and developed women's congregations 'were influential members of their society' at that time in Ireland (Magray, p.vii). Magray suggests that with their wealth, they were able to build 'palatial convents' all over Ireland as well as schools, orphanages, hospitals, factories, refuges, workshops and reformatories. These women were not merely passive servants but educated women at the centre of the creation of a devout Catholic culture. Convent buildings were often endowed or gifted by wealthy Catholics.

Among them was Nano Nagle, founder of the Presentation Sisters in County Cork in 1775, who set up a Catholic school for poor children in her area when this was forbidden by the authorities. By doing so she endangered herself and her family. Nano Nagle and her family were educated in France, as were many of the middle class Catholics at that time. There was a 'large Irish Catholic community there' which was made up of male and female Irish people, including lay and religious people (Magray, p 16). Other religious orders for nuns established before 1870 or in the late nineteenth century were the Mercy Sisters, established by Catherine McAuley in 1831 in the centre of the city of Dublin, and the Brigidines, which were established by Father Delany in Tullow, County Carlow in 1807. These women were very powerful not only because they had wealth and education but also because they formed communities together and created a world where they could not be controlled by men. They set themselves outside the parish church. Although most of the religious orders were under the jurisdiction of the local bishop in theory, in practice it varied from place to place and few bishops carried out their rights to oversee their local convents (Magray). Other orders required only the authority of the Mother General of the order and not that of the bishop in order to carry out important matters (Considine, 1983). Some widowed women who had inherited wealth

from their deceased husbands brought their wealth to the convent and followed the religious life as nuns. Magray states that in 1750 'despite two hundred years of (Catholic) persecution, there were twelve houses of religious women in Ireland belonging to four established orders' (p.6) : namely the Poor Clare, Dominican, Carmelite and Augustinian communities. All four had establishments in Galway and Dublin.

Magray points out that some women preferred to do work outside the convent. One of these (as mentioned earlier) was Honora or Nano Nagle, from County Cork, who in 1775 formed the Sisters of the Charitable Instruction so she would not be confined to a convent. Later they became known as the Sisters of the Presentation. According to Magray, Nagle started her first school in Cork city during the 1750s, where she 'assembled thirty wicked children' (p.40) and, after a few months, 'two hundred of those "wicked" children were flocking daily to this novel and clandestine Catholic school' (p. 40). Within these elite Catholic convents, existed class divisions (Magray) as 'women's religious life mirrored and reinforced the rigid, class-based social structure of the wider society' (p. 44). Any unmarried Catholic woman could join the order and the objective was to provide poor uneducated women with a good education and a good knowledge of religion but they could not become 'choir sisters' even if they were holy. Choir sisters were in a class of their own, a higher class than the lay sisters who did the menial jobs around the convent and they came from the lower classes. Magray states: 'The (class) barrier was impenetrable; social mobility was not a feature of convent life in nineteenth-century Ireland' (p. 44). It is noteworthy that, while these women operated outside a patriarchal society, they maintained the hierarchies associated with that patriarchy.

Famine in the 1840s brought about great change in the 'social and economic structures of society' (Magray, 1998, p. 5) in Ireland, which ultimately led to discontent and unrest (Jackson, 1947; Coogan, 2003). It also led to significant poverty within these Irish populations. Many, unable to pay their rent were evicted from their homes. Some of these homes were then burned to the ground. This gave the landlords the opportunity to 'clear an uneconomic tenantry off their over-subdivided holdings' (Coogan, 2003, p.6). This change in the sub-division of land meant that farms were usually passed onto only one son, not divided up among the siblings as before (McKenna, 2006), and by the time the son took over the farm he was typically middle-aged and often had decided not to marry. There was a large decline in Irish marriage rates during the period between 1840 and 1960. Many people never married, or, if they did marry, married late in life (McKenna, 2006; Clear, 2007). The famine resulted in Ireland's population declining by two million during the late 1840s; one million to starvation and the others to emigration, the majority to America. There was unrest around the country and general hatred towards England because the English in Ireland were exporting grain to England while the Irish starved (Johnson, 1982).

The Irish in Ireland had just survived a civil war in 1922, which resulted from the signing of 'The Irish Free State Treaty' in 1921. This meant that 26 counties of Ireland now had 'Dominion status' (Gray, 1994). Later, in 1937, Mr de Valera, the leader at the time, introduced a 'republican constitution' (Gray, 1994) and in 1949 Ireland seceded from the British Commonwealth, becoming the Republic of Ireland and gaining independence from Britain. Partition occurred in the six counties known as Northern Ireland, which continued to be ruled by British law.

During the late 1920s, life in general was difficult for everyone in Ireland, especially after the Civil War in 1922. Irish people were confused and found it difficult to trust anyone: in some cases even their brothers or cousins (Gray, 1994). This came about because one group, known as the 'Republican IRA Irregulars', was not satisfied when Michael Collins from the other main group known as 'Free Staters', signed the Irish Free State Treaty (Gray, 1994). The Republicans wanted to carry on the fight for 'full freedom' for all Ireland (Blake, 1986; Gray, 1994, p.85). Communities were divided as well as families, who fought each other in skirmishes and ambushes around the country. It was a very unsettling time in Ireland. Some young men joined the 'flying columns' or volunteers without knowing which side they were fighting for. It gave them something to do and also something to eat. Some of the religious sisters who took part in this research lived through this time in the late 1920s. It was a difficult time for everyone to get work, especially for women (Gray, 1994).

The voice of women during this time, in the early part of the twentieth century, was strong and was heard via some particularly vocal individuals. Maud Gonne, who was 'an ardent Irish nationalist', addressed crowds 'of 20,000 people' (Gray 1994); Countess Constance Markievicz and Maud Gonne were both members of the organisation, 'Inghinidhe na hEireann (Daughters of Erin) and fought for 'the complete independence of Ireland' (Ward, 1983, p. 51) along with many other Irish women. These women had independent jobs and they were well organised to run meetings in their homes. Later, another organisation called 'Cumann na mBan' (Irishwomen's Council) was established and these women played a major role in the Easter Rising in 1916, as a result of which Countess Markievicz was imprisoned in an English jail for her part in the rising (Ward, 1983).

For women in Ireland during much of the period examined in this study, the choices in life were limited: marry or adopt the religious life. While there was a history of women having a political voice, the feminist voice was rarely heard. Women could only be heard within specific structures and in specific contexts. For much of this period, economic independence was beyond the reach of most women. Social independence in terms of choosing not to marry was an option if one was prepared to be known by the disparaging term 'spinster' or if one entered into another form of dependency via religious life. For the majority of the Irish population in the west of Ireland poverty was endemic. Marriage did not offer women a way out of poverty, but simply added more children to be fed (McKenna, 2006).

Ireland was deeply Catholic. During the late nineteenth century and early to mid-twentieth century, the Irish attended Mass and the sacraments more than at any other time in history (McKenna, 2006). The Catholic clergy introduced new devotions for the people such as the rosary, novenas, benediction, devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Conception, pilgrimages and retreats (Brown, 2004). The religious calendar mirrored the seasonal calendar of rural life, and so life within the church was socially and economically consistent and a great number of the young men who entered the national seminary to study for the priesthood at Maynooth, County Kildare, were the sons of farmers (Brown, 2004).

THE IRISH IN AUSTRALIA

Irish-born immigrants and their offspring have been part of the population of Australia since the First Fleet arrived in New South Wales in 1788 (Reid, 2011). According to Reid, 'their [the Irish] influence upon, and contribution to, Australia's ever-changing and evolving cultural, economic, political and social

life was of central significance' (p.14). Reid states that this was due to the Irish and those of Irish descent forming a large part of the Australian population, about twenty to thirty per cent, up until 1914. Reid also states that 'Australia remains the most Irish country outside of Ireland.'(p.14). This 'large Irish presence' (p.14) had a large impact on the contribution of the Irish to Australia. The mistreatment of the Irish convicts during the early days of Australian colonisation, involved many being forced by the British authorities to attend non-Catholic services. This led to considerable Irish resentment of the British.

The significance of the Irish contribution to developing Australian white society has been disputed. Hogan (1888) in his book, 'The Irish in Australia', states: 'In every colonial parliament, Irishmen will be found distinguishing themselves as political leaders.'(p.6). Reid suggests this is an exaggeration by a proud Irishman attempting to claim importance for his people and heritage. Hogan was born in Ireland in 1854 and came to the goldfields in Victoria with his parents when he was two years old (Reid 2011). Here there is a reference to the contribution to Australian society by Irishmen but not a mention of the contribution to Australian society by Irish women. Kiernan (1984) points out that the Irish in Australia have done remarkably well in many areas and they have had considerable success, despite their 'poor beginnings as transported convicts' (p.6). 'Many of them have risen to achieve the highest positions in Australia' (p.6).

The Irish were introduced to Australia when many of them, mostly men, were sent here as convicts by the British for committing minor crimes, such as stealing farm animals in their local community in Ireland (O'Farrell 2000). O'Farrell (1968) states that 'of all convicts transported to Australia (up to 1868), about a quarter, 30,000 men and 9,000 women came directly from Ireland.'

(p.2). However, not all were 'ordinary criminals', according to O'Farrell (1968). 'Nearly a third of the 2,086 offenders transported from Ireland between 1791 and 1803 had been convicted for riot and sedition.'(p.2). In other words, they rebelled against British rule in Ireland. There was a major rebellion in 1798 in Ireland and those who were captured were transported to New South Wales. As a result, the numbers of rebels were growing in Sydney and, in 1804, an Irishman, William Johnston, and Father Dixon, one of the first Irish Catholic priests in Sydney, gathered 300 convicts together for Mass at Castle Hill, with the intention of having a rebellion against the British gaol wardens. When the 'English gaolers' found out about it they blamed Father Dixon for his 'Catholic teachings'(p. 4) and he was forbidden to say Mass again (O'Farrell, 1968). Along with Father Dixon, two other Irish priests, Father James Harold and Father Peter O'Neil, were transported to Australia for allegedly being involved in the 1798 rebellion in Ireland, but only Father Dixon was allowed to carry out his priestly ministry for a brief period, as they were convicts and they were obliged 'to attend Protestant services' (O'Farrell, p.5). The Catholic convicts survived without a priest for thirty years, except for a short period with Father O'Flynn who arrived at the end of 1817 and was deported in May 1818. Then, in 1820, two Catholic chaplains were sent to Sydney from Ireland, Father Therry and Father Conolly. Conolly later went to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), where he worked for twenty years (Cleary, 1933; Dixon, 1996).

Among the earliest emigration of Irish women were the group known as 'The Orphan Girls' (Gurry, 1993), about 4,000 girls who were sent to Australia from the workhouses in Ireland between 1848 and 1850 to work as servants. This was the time of the great famine in Ireland.

Portia Robinson (cited in Kiernan, 1986) points out that the Irish women convicts 'contributed to the emerging pattern of Australian colonial society chiefly in two ways: first as family women and second as working women' (p.108). As many of the women convicts came from rural Ireland they brought their traditions and values with them as they went with their husbands to settle down in the Australian bush, 'living in the pioneer conditions of frontier life' (p.108).

In 1847 Irish-born Father James Alipius Goold became the first Bishop of Melbourne after spending ten years in Sydney. He travelled overland by coach to St Francis Church in Melbourne, which took 19 days as the roads were just dirt tracks (Ebsworth, 1973). There were three priests in the Port Phillip District: Father Geoghegan and Father Coffey in Melbourne and Father Kavanagh in Portland. Bishop Goold set about building churches for his rapidly growing Catholic community. With two acres of land on Eastern Hill, Bishop Goold laid the foundation stone for St. Patrick's Church on April 9, 1850. However work on the church had to be put on hold because in 1851 gold was discovered at Ballarat and most of the male population in Melbourne and in small towns left their jobs to go seek their fortune in the goldmines (Ebsworth, 1973). According to Ebsworth, 'gold-fever had taken possession of the community, diggers were arriving daily in great numbers from the other colonies, and every ship from the old world was crowded with fortune-seekers' (p.5) and among them were many Irish Catholics.

Hill (2010) states that after news of the discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria in 1851, reached Ireland, more than a hundred thousand Irish people came to Australia in the next ten years and 'a further 300,000 by the end of the nineteenth century'(p.113). At this time, the potato-famine was causing

havoc in Ireland with tenant farmers evicted from their houses. Most of them could not afford food let alone money to pay rent to their British landlords. Many Irish came to Australia to escape the famine and 'British oppression' (p.112) and the Irish became 'a dominant influence on the cultural development of Australia' (p.113). Among them was Peter Lalor who arrived in Australia in 1852. In 1854 he played a major part in the Eureka uprising at Ballarat (Hill, 2010), where he fought for the rights of the gold miners.

The combination of the Gold Rush and the terrible famine years in Ireland after 1846 brought an influx of Irish into Victoria and also Irish priests to look after their flock (Ebsworth, 1973). There were 18,014 Catholics in Victoria based on the census of 1851, with 5,631 in and around Melbourne. The rest lived in the farming and pastoral areas around Victoria. As there were only a small number of priests to minister to them, Bishop Goold sent to Ireland for more priests and so 'began that steady stream of priests from Ireland which has been so fruitful in its blessings to this far-distant country' (Ebsworth 1973, p.4). Later on, as Catholic schools were established by the religious sisters, more Irish nuns were brought out from Ireland to teach Australian Catholic children as the need arose. It was into this Irish diaspora that the participants of this study came.

DR. DANIEL MANNIX

The Irish who came to Australia in the nineteenth century had an enormous influence on the Australian Catholic Church. That influence remained very strong throughout the early decades of the twentieth century and there are particular elements even today (Dwyer & English, 1990). The Irish clergy have dominated Australian Catholic life until recent times. There were many important Irish Catholic leaders down the centuries such as Bishop Goold, Cardinal Moran, and one of the most charismatic Archbishops of Melbourne, Dr.

Daniel Mannix. Mannix became Archbishop of Melbourne following the death of Archbishop Thomas Carr. Both these Irishmen were very involved in education.

As stated in Chapter 1, Dr. Mannix came to Melbourne from Maynooth College in Ireland in 1913 as Coadjutor to Archbishop Thomas Carr, who was getting on in years. Dr. Mannix was very 'outspoken' and 'assertive' and he 'believed passionately in Catholic education, and in the right of Catholics to be supported by the government in choosing their own schools' (Elliot, p.135). He urged Catholics to stand up for their beliefs (Elliot, 2003). He was a great believer in 'educational justice' and he helped the Catholic Federation in this area.

According to O'Farrell, within a year of arrival in Australia, Mannix gained a public reputation by the press and became known as the 'most belligerent and provocative Catholic prelate in Australia' (O'Farrell, p. 201). In Melbourne, the Catholics were delighted with their new leader, who stood up for them against a government who refused them 'educational justice'. Dr. Mannix did not give up on the need for government support for Catholic schools even during the outbreak of World War 1 when he stated that:

A paramount and dominating issue for us is whether our Catholic schools are to retain their Christian character, and whether Australia is, as the years go by, to become more and more a Christian land or more and more a pagan land (O'Farrell cited in Elliot, p.135).

Mannix, in his endeavours to achieve 'educational justice' for Catholics, began a campaign in 1914, during the war, to convince Catholics not to vote for anti-Catholic politicians in elections, whether from the Labor Party or not. He received support from the Catholic Federation in Victoria. He warned the Labor Party that if they did not support Catholic education and interests, the Catholics would withdraw their support and form their own political party. The Victorian

Catholic Workers Association, made up of Catholic members from the Labor Party, was formed in 1915 and, with help from the bishops, worked within the Labor Party for 'educational justice' (Elliot, 2003; Santamaria, 1984).

Mannix observed that despite Catholics making up one-quarter of the population in Australia, they had less than one-tenth of the wealth. In order to address this imbalance, Mannix actively promoted university education for Catholics so that they could 'take their places in every walk of Australian life' (Elliot, p.136). He was involved in laying the foundation stone of Newman College, in the University of Melbourne, in June 1916. Newman was a college of residence for Catholic students at the university and he took part at its opening in March 1918. He also encouraged intellectual debate among Catholic students (O'Farrell, 1968).

During World War 1, many Catholics felt like outsiders in Australia as the distrust between Catholics and the government, and between Catholics and other denominations deteriorated so badly that by 1916, they were accused of not contributing to the war effort (Elliot, 2003). At this time, the Easter Rising in April 1916 was taking place in Ireland against British rule and many Catholics in Australia took the side of the Irish by raising money to help rebuild Dublin city. It was also at this time that conscription of young men to fight in World War 1 was spoken of by the Australian government. Mannix was fiercely opposed to conscription because he argued that the Irish in Australia should not fight on the side of the British government when the British were fighting the Irish in Ireland (Elliot, 2003). He pointed out that the men could spend their time building up Australia instead of going to war and fighting for the British (Elliot, 2003). Other prominent Catholic leaders throughout Australia agreed with Mannix on conscription. Many Catholics at this time felt oppressed and they looked on

Mannix as their spokesman. The problem of conscription caused a split in the Labor Party in 1916, which resulted in there being more Catholics than Protestants in the Labor Party. Some wealthy Catholics disagreed with Mannix but they could not silence him and it followed that the first referendum on conscription was defeated. This defeat led to some anti-Catholic feeling across Australia and the Australian government was angry that the Catholic church supported the Irish rebellion in Ireland against the British (Elliot, 2003). In 1917 Archbishop Carr died and Mannix became Archbishop of Melbourne.

Mannix took great pride in having a St. Patrick's Day procession through the streets of Melbourne each year. The Catholic community continued to build their schools and parish churches as the Catholic population grew and they formed many different sporting clubs and Catholic action groups sponsored by the bishops and working for many causes among the working classes (Elliot, 2003).

Between 1954 and 1957 there were many arguments within the Labor Party and some members were expelled. A group known as 'The Movement' that included Mannix and his friend Bob Santamaria formed their own political party which became known as the Democratic Labor Party (DLP). Their main objective was to fight Communism (Elliot, 2003).

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

The Great Depression (1929–32) was a time of extreme difficulty for people in Australia. This time of hardship began for a lot of people even before the stock market crash in prices in Wall Street in New York and it continued until World War II (1939-1945) (Australian Government, 2009). Unemployment in Australia had already reached 10% before the stock market crash in October 1929 and this was the beginning of a severe depression for the whole industrialized world.

In 1930 unemployment in Australia reached 21% and in mid-1932 there were almost 32% of Australians out of work. This was devastating for the Australian people and it had a severe impact on the society in general because many people lost their homes due to a lack of work and regular income (Australian Government, 2009). As a result of the Great Depression, children from working class families left school at 13 or 14 if the Merit Certificate had been obtained (Blake, 1973); married women worked inside and outside the home; young people found it easier to get jobs and migrants were resented because they worked for less wages than others (Australian Government, 2009).

Lowenstein (1998, p 2) remarks on the plight of many women during the Great Depression in Australia:

Women carried a tremendous burden. Domestic work was still hard, isolated, full time labour, repetitive never-ending toil....Mothers who were also breadwinners toiled doubly hard. It was common for a woman to come home exhausted after a day's hard work washing and scrubbing, to find the unemployed menfolk leaning over the gate waiting for her to cook tea. It was beneath a man's dignity to help with the housework. It hardly occurred to women to ask for such help. It would be a further blow to a male dignity already much battered by unemployment.

Relief organizations were set up in order to supply food and clothing to many people, who were struggling to survive, although some people found it difficult to accept charity. In Victoria, the dole was given in cash payments to the unemployed but not in the other states (Lowenstein, 1998).

Slowly Australia recovered from the Great Depression because of large increases in the 'quantity of rural exports' (Gregory & Butlin, 1988. p. 28). Australia's economy struggled for a number of years and then at the end of the 1930s, World War II broke out in Europe. The Prime Minister, Robert Menzies

pledged support to the United Kingdom and Australia was also therefore at war. Notably, Ireland remained neutral.

WORLD WAR II

During Australia's involvement in World War II, many male teachers joined the war effort and, as a result, there was a shortage of staff, equipment and money for schools (Blake, 1973; Spaul, 1982). Those enlisting for the war, included single male teachers from 18 to 35 years. By 1943, the state teaching services in Australia had lost almost 50% of their male teachers to the war effort. Married women teachers were, while the Second World War was underway, allowed to teach in schools but only on a temporary basis. They did not achieve permanency in Victoria until 1956 (Blake, 1973). Not only was there a shortage of teachers in schools, there was also a large increase in student numbers and some teachers had very large classes; one teacher had to teach 92 students for an entire year (Spaul, 1982).

After the war, a further increase in student numbers was experienced due to an influx of migrants from the war-zone areas. Classes typically consisted of 60 or more students. Nuns would not send the students away because of their belief that all Catholic children were entitled to an education in Catholic schools.

RELIGIOUS ORDERS

As discussed previously, four religious orders of nuns were founded in Ireland during the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries – Presentation (1775), Brigidines (1807), Charity (1815) and Mercy (1831) - by middle class Irish Catholic women who were strong, articulate, independent, wealthy and well educated (Magray, 1998; Clear, 1987). Many religious orders were involved with teaching and nursing in Ireland and they brought these skills with them to Australia and other parts of the world. Those widely involved with teaching in Australia were Mercy Sisters (most numerous), then in order, Josephites, Presentations, Good Samaritans, Dominicans and Brigidines. The

participants in this study belong to Brigidine, Presentation and Josephite Orders, which were more involved with teaching than other religious orders. The Brigidines and Presentation orders were established in Ireland by Irish nuns and priests but the Josephites were founded by Mary MacKillop, with the help of Father Tenison Woods, in Australia. Mary MacKillop recently became Australia's first saint and is now known as 'Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop'. The Josephite order was very popular among the Irish girls and a Juniorate was set up in Newmarket, Co. Cork, where all the Irish Josephites assembled before they set sail for Australia.

Although the Josephites are an Australian order of nuns, they have a novitiate in Newmarket in County Cork, Ireland, where all the Irish Josephites in this study joined. This order is different to other orders of nuns in that there is no 'layered' system, which means that all sisters took turns doing chores around the convent such as cleaning and cooking. They were all considered equal, all doing the work for God. However, the order was still a hierarchical system because it had different layers of leadership, with Mother General in charge of the sisters.

The Brigidines were established by Bishop Daniel Delany, who noticed the 'misery and degradation of many Catholics' in Ireland after his return from Europe in the early 1780s (Magray, 1998). He established a 'community of Sisters in Tullow, in County Carlow, and he dedicated them to St. Brigid in 1807' (Sturrock, 1995, p.1). Brigidine convents flourished in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century and as the Catholic population in Australia, which was mostly Irish, grew in numbers, the Australian Catholic Bishops, mostly Irish, turned for help to the Irish religious sisters to help foster the faith in their large dioceses. After the Education Act of 1872, which stated that government

provided education was to be free, compulsory and secular, the Bishops were determined to provide Catholic children with a Catholic education and thus Catholic schools were built and teachers were recruited from the Irish religious orders in Ireland. Many of the Brigidines came from rural Ireland and their beginnings in Victoria were firmly rooted in country areas (Sturrock, 1995). Among other orders, who came to Australia, to help in 'the Australian mission field' were the Sisters of Charity, the Mercy, Good Shepherd, Presentation and Dominican Sisters. The Irish nuns taught the Australian children in the Catholic schools in the same manner as they had been taught in Ireland, with great emphasis placed on teaching and practising the Catholic religion.

In the Catholic school the most important role of the teacher was preparing the children for the sacraments, especially First Confession and First Holy Communion. The nuns in the 1930s prepared three lots of children for Holy Communion in one year, made up of thirty boys and girls in each group. The children had to know their catechism by heart for the priest.

In the 1970s, as more and more lay teachers joined the Catholic school system, due to lack of nuns, and 'decreasing membership in religious institutes' (MacGinley, 2002) the curriculum began to change with less emphasis on the Catholic religion, as some lay teachers in the Catholic secondary schools were non-Catholic. The curriculum focussed on subjects other than religion; such as mathematics, science, history and geography.

MacGinley (2002, p. 337) provides the number of women belonging to religious orders in Australia in the period 1901-1976 (see Table 1):

Table 1: Numbers of women belonging to religious orders in Australia: 1901-1976.

Year	1901	1926	1951	1966	1971	1976
Number	3,622	8,141	11,245	14,622	13,869	12,469

MacGinley (2002, p. 337)

These figures show that from 1901 to 1951 there was a gradual increase in the number of women joining religious orders and these numbers peaked in 1966 with 14,622 women in religious orders. There was a slow decrease in the number of women joining in the ten years up to 1976. This decrease in numbers of religious women took place after 1966 with the first implementation of the recommendations of Vatican II. The Second Vatican Council introduced greater freedom for religious orders, encouraged personal engagement with religion and led some women to question if they still had a vocation for the religious life. Many of these women left the religious orders after careful consideration and counselling. It was difficult for them to leave their institutions as they had known nothing else throughout their adult lives and they had no experience in the outside world as adults. After they left they were on their own unless they had a family member or a good friend or friends to rely on.

TEACHING

The religious orders set up their own teacher-training centres in the convent, so they could train their own teachers (Mercy Teachers' College, 1984). The nuns did not like their novices leaving the convent and mixing with lay students, even when the lay person (a student also) was a novice's sister, (Sturrock, 1995; Mercy Teachers' College, 1984). The teacher-training centres were similar to Catholic Teacher Training centres for training primary teachers in Ireland (Magray, 1998). This replicated the ways in which religious sisters were educated as teachers in Ireland. The most notable of these teachers' colleges

was the Mercy College which was established in 1909 and closed in 1984 (Mercy Teachers' College, 1984). It was established to train Catholic women to teach in Catholic schools but over time it reflected the rate of change in Australian society which became more diverse and pluralistic.

Teacher-training was carried out alongside the nuns' religious training and sometimes, after a few months of training, the nuns were sent into classrooms to replace nuns who were required elsewhere. They gained experience 'on the job', learning as they went. One elderly nun in particular, told me that in order to teach the children maths she would travel to Melbourne from a country town at the weekend to learn maths and then return to teach the children on the Monday morning (interview with participant in May, 2005). Further discussion of these experiences is located in Chapter 5.

Changes began to happen within the Catholic Church following the Vatican Council of 1962-65. Catholic schools had similar problems to the State schools, such as a shortage of qualified teachers and large classes (Barcan, 1980). With the introduction of State aid during the early 60s to Catholic schools, they were able to employ lay teachers because the classes in the Catholic primary schools were still much larger than in the State schools (Barcan, 1980). During the period of the Whitlam Government, the Karmel Report was introduced which meant that almost 80% of Catholic schools' costs came from State and Federal funding (O'Donoghue, 2001).

VICTORIAN EDUCATION

Waugh (1997) highlighted how National Education was achieved in 1831 in Ireland by setting up a 'mixed' system so that all denominations (Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian) were represented as commissioners on the governing body, namely the 'National Board'. Soon elements of the Irish

National system spread to British colonies, in particular the Colonies of New South Wales and Victoria, where the regulations of the National Board in Dublin were used as a blueprint (Waugh, 1997).

National Education was first established in New South Wales in 1848 and was inspired by the Governor, Sir Richard Burke, who was also involved in setting up National Education in Ireland before coming to Australia. In 1851, Victoria became a separate colony and a National Board was set up in Melbourne and National schools operated until 1862. To make the National system work effectively the Commissioners set up specific rules and regulations for all the main participants, including 'local boards, inspectors, teachers and pupils' (Waugh, p.v). The curriculum was based on the 'school texts of the Irish Commissioners' (Waugh, p.v). Then, in 1862 they were forced to amalgamate under a 'Board of Education' (Waugh p.v).

In 1901, an Education Act in Victoria introduced state education post-primary school and in 1929 'a state-wide scheme of vocational guidance was launched by the Victorian Education Department' (Theobald & Selleck, 1990.p.134). Many school and course options were introduced and, by the middle of the 1920s, children were required to stay at school until they were fourteen years, which was the leaving age then, or they could go on 'to a central, a higher elementary, a junior technical, a domestic arts, or a district high school' (Theobald & Selleck, 1990). During the Depression it was difficult for children to go to school as times were hard (Lowenstein, 1998).

During World War II, there was a shortage of male teachers due to the fact that many men had enlisted in the war effort or were called-up to serve in the armed forces (Blake, 1973). Married women teachers were given temporary teaching jobs while the men were away from the classroom. After the war there was an

influx of migrants in the schools and classes were very large in both Catholic and State schools (Blake, 1973). Commonwealth funding for the establishment of libraries and the building of science rooms was introduced to Catholic schools in the 1960s. The Whitlam Government initiated the Karmel Report in 1973. The Report recommended additional funding to disadvantaged schools (including Catholic schools) which was a great relief for the Catholic schools, as they were struggling to survive (O'Donoghue, 2001).

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS

In the late 1800s, Miss Barbara Bell came from England at the request of Mother Gonzaga Barry to teach new methods of teaching to the Loreto nuns at Ballarat (Fogarty, 1959). In the early 1900s, at the request of Archbishop Thomas Carr, Miss Bell moved to Melbourne to instruct the nuns from the Sisters of Mercy, Presentation order and the Faithful Companions of Jesus. In 1905 Archbishop Carr appointed Miss Bell as 'Mistress of Method' (Fogarty, 1959, p.436) at the new Catholic Training College at Albert Park. The religious orders in Victoria registered their training colleges in Victoria under the Council of Public Education in the 1950s. The women who took part in this study, especially the older group, did not have access to professional development programs to enhance their work as teachers and educators. They did however learn on the job from their professional practice and from interaction with mentors, peers and colleagues.

The curriculum changes over the period were substantial with numerous innovations for teaching students to read and the introduction of Cuisenaire Rods to teach mathematics. Teachers were treated as professionals in the local communities and they were held in high regard by the families involved with each school. The role of parents was very important especially in regards to

discipline, as the parents worked together with the teachers for the good of the children (stated by a participant, interviewed in July 2005). Later on in the 1970s, many parents played important roles in primary schools supporting teachers' reading programs in the classroom.

THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

During the period 1962 to 1965, the Second Vatican Council brought about many changes in the Catholic Church throughout the world (Elliot, 2003). Pope John XXIII opened the Council on 2nd October, 1962, and Pope Paul VI brought the Council to an end on 8th December 1965.

The Council changed to active participation of the congregation in the liturgy of the Mass by replacing Latin with the vernacular language. The sacraments and the form of the Mass were simplified with the aim of making them more meaningful to those participating. The Council stipulated that moral standards should be upheld in the media, particularly in television and film (Elliot, 2003). The traditions of the Eastern Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, the Council declared, should be held sacred and combined fully to make up 'the whole Church of Christ' (Elliot, p. 156).

The Council stressed that the mission for all Catholics was to spread the word of God and evangelize all communities because everyone in the Church is a missionary and 'all Catholics are called to holiness' (Elliot, p. 156). The Council gave guidance to the people of the modern world on matters relating to marriage and family life, politics and relationships between international communities (McEnroy, 1996). It also stressed the importance of Ecumenism and stated that all baptized people should be called Christian and that Catholics should be involved with non-Catholic Christians as well as other great non-Christian world religions and show respect for these religions (Elliot, 2003).

Religious freedom, according to the Council, must be allowed for all societies and no one should be compelled to take on the Christian faith. Everybody should be allowed to practise their faith. Those in religious life were advised to reflect on the 'original vision of their founder and to renew their practice of their vows of chastity, poverty and obedience' (Elliot, p. 157). As regards Christian education of youth, it must take place in the home, at school, and in the Church. Bishops had to obtain a list of qualifications to become a bishop and they were required to teach, lead the liturgy, and care for those in need. The same applied to priests, who were required by the Council to teach the gospel, celebrate the sacraments and serve their community. Training of future priests was to be related to the cultural and social circumstances where they reside (Elliot, 2003). The change brought about by involving the laity in the mission of the Catholic Church was the biggest change of all. Lay people were encouraged to take a much more active role in the Church, especially women who had not been allowed inside the altar rails prior to the Second Vatican Council. Now they were allowed to do the readings at Mass, serve Holy Communion and Wine and administer at Holy Communion Services when a priest is not available. Women took part in many activities in the local parish community such as Baptism preparations, pre-marriage courses with their husbands and teaching Sunday school to students attending State schools. Girls were now able to attend the priest as an altar server (McEnroy, 1996).

This chapter has provided a review of the historical backgrounds and contexts of the participants in this study particularly as they relate to Ireland, Rome and Australia. A detailed description of the methodology employed in this research will be discussed in the next chapter: Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study has been undertaken primarily as narrative analysis. The research strategies used in this study are described and explained in this chapter. These include a discussion of the nature of qualitative research, oral history, interviewing, individual's stories, and narrative analysis. An outline of the research participants is also provided. The approaches used to best interpret and present the data are described and explained. This research consists of a balance of an historical account as well as oral histories.

This research study focused on 'The professional experience of Irish Catholic women teachers in Victoria from 1930 to 1980'. The research is a collection of stories and oral histories derived from interviews with Irish Catholic women, who were teachers in Victoria during this period: 1930 to 1980. This study sought to investigate how Irish women teachers experienced education in Catholic schools in Victoria in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, discipline, culture and in other ways.

This research is an attempt to explore an historical reality – the immigration of Irish women to teach in Catholic schools in Australia – and to give voice to those who were involved. It subscribes to a feminist epistemology that values the stories of the women involved in the historical experience (Campion, 1997), above the patriarchal recording of this history. Anderson (1995) argues that feminist epistemology is concerned about how gender impacts on knowledge creation and inquiry. The role of women in many areas of society has been overlooked compared to the role of men. This is particularly relevant when the majority of these women were operating within the overtly patriarchal, and at

times misogynistic, institution of the Catholic Church (Macdonald et al.1999; Campion, 1982).

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

As this study is concerned with the experiences of individuals, it is a qualitative study, with the purpose of understanding how individual experiences might guide us to a richer understanding of a cultural collective (Atkinson, 1998). The inquiry is focused on professional experiences, and the ways that these assist us as readers in the twentieth-first century to build knowledge of educational processes and experiences, and the role of individuals in the construction of the education system as it exists in Victoria today.

This research comes about because of my personal interest, as the researcher, in the lives and experiences of Irish Catholic women teachers in education over a period of fifty years, from 1930 to 1980, which will cover a period of change from largely religious teachers to largely lay teachers in Catholic schools in Victoria. This study aims to provide evidence of what life was like as a female religious teacher and female lay teacher in Catholic schools during this period.

This research will be useful for historical reasons as it provides insights into the development of Catholic Education in Victoria during a period of social turmoil. The Great Depression of the 1930s and then World War II (1939-1945), involved many men going to war while the women 'kept the home-fires burning', and then subsequently, the influx of migrants and refugees from war-torn Europe in the 1950s. A common thread through this period relates to the issues of how communities were maintained and how community and educational values of that time can be observed and interpreted (O'Farrell, 1985).

The research explores the feelings and emotions recalled by twenty-two women who tell their stories. My study is qualitative research. Denzin & Lincoln (2000, p.8) point out that 'the word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency.' Researchers using qualitative research emphasize 'the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000 p.8). This study is very much concerned with processes: the processes of travel and transition, of changing identity and of lived experiences. This research captures 'the individual's point of view, examining the constraints of everyday life and securing thick descriptions' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.10). As the researcher, I make use of first-person accounts, life histories, historical narratives, ethnographic prose, and biographical and autobiographical materials. My engagement as researcher with the research is inherently personal. My own story prompted this work, coming as I did from Ireland as a young woman in 1975, to teach in Queensland. Over many years I became aware of myself as part of a much larger story of immigration, education and cultural significance. This prompted my interest in the stories of others, over several decades, and to a desire to understand the ways in which individual female Irish teachers made meaning from their choices and the choices made for them.

This work is therefore consistent with Strauss & Corbin's (1998, pp.10 -11) understanding of qualitative research as 'any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification.' They note that qualitative research refers to 'research about person's lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational

functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations.'

Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p.5) state that:

qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experiences; introspection; life story; interview; artefacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives.

Importantly, qualitative research 'locates the observer in the world' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p.4), consisting of 'a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible' and that 'transform the world.' Qualitative research involves 'an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world' studying 'things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (p.5). Indeed, this has been the purpose of my study: to place myself as the researcher into the worlds of others, and to capture and retell their stories in order to make visible their personal and professional experience and impact on the Victorian community.

RECRUITMENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

My aim for this study was to collect oral evidence through the use of unstructured interviews, from Irish Catholic women teachers. This oral evidence focused on the women's professional experience in Victoria from 1930 to 1980.

Twenty-two participants were invited to take part in the research (refer to Appendix One). Thirteen participants came from the Josephite Order, three from the Brigidines, three from the Presentation Order and three participants were lay women. Of the participant group, five nuns arrived in Australia and

taught in the 1930s, two nuns in the 1940s, eight nuns in the 1950s and four nuns in the 1960s. Two of the lay women came and taught in Australia in the 1960s and a third lay woman taught in Australia in the 1970s. Many of the participants knew one another. The very nature of the experience, being part of an Irish diaspora, meant that many participants had met socially prior to the study.

I employed a number of strategies to assist in the identification of potential participants. Initially participants were sought via Irish radio in Melbourne. I visited the Irish Welfare Bureau in Melbourne, where I was introduced to one of the regular announcers on an Irish program on Melbourne radio. I told her about my research plan and what I planned to achieve by going on the radio. She invited me to meet her at the radio station studio for an on air interview on the Irish program, where I explained my research topic and I invited interested women to contact me on my home phone number. Three participants became involved in this way; all lay people now in their early sixties, who came to Australia in the 1960s (two) and in the 1970s.

A second strategy involved me contacting various religious orders and inviting any relevant people to participate. It was at this stage that I employed a snowball technique (Coleman, 1959), which involved identifying potential participants, based on recommendations by others, whom I had previously interviewed. I approached for example, members of the Josephite Order of nuns at local primary and secondary schools and a principal of the primary school gave me the phone number of an Irish Josephite nun in Melbourne. When I contacted her, she was very happy to take part. She in turn recommended two names and provided phone numbers of other potential participants. These two nuns connected me to two more and then to another

nun who lived close by. These sisters also put me in touch with two other Irish women teachers who had been in Australia. Some nuns had retired at this stage and they were living in nursing homes around Melbourne. I was given the phone numbers of the nursing homes and I contacted the participants there to organise an interview at a suitable time. Other Josephite nuns had returned to Ireland to retire and I was given their phone numbers and addresses so that they could be contacted.

As part of my recruitment I organised a trip to Ireland, where I contacted and arranged to meet three retired nuns in Limerick. One nun had travelled from Dublin and another from Killarney to meet for an interview in Limerick. The Josephite nuns were very helpful and they passed on my email address to two other retired nuns living in Ireland, who responded to my series of questions (Refer to Appendix Two) via email.

As a result of an interview with one Josephite nun, I was connected to three of her Irish friends in the Presentation Order in Melbourne; two of whom were in a nursing home and the third was doing pastoral work in a Melbourne parish.

A lay friend of mine gave me the phone number of a Brigidine nun, who lectured in theology. I rang her and organised an interview and, following the interview, she gave me the phone numbers of two more Brigidine nuns who were friends of hers.

The purpose and nature of the interview protocol was to explore various issues and perceptions of the women's experiences as teachers; as well as their reasons for coming to Australia; how they travelled to Australia; their first impressions of their surroundings when they got to Australia; their training as teachers and nuns and their professional lives as teachers and nuns.

I interviewed twenty-two participants for this research. I selected four of these interviews to be shared as stories, due to their particular richness and detailed accounts over an extended period and the capacity of these four participants to recall key facts and personal and professional experiences (see Chapter Four). These women had rarely had the opportunity to share their stories and responded positively to having someone interested and desirous of listening.

ORAL HISTORY AND INTERVIEWS

Oral history is used as a part of my research as it defines the social history both in time and place. Thompson (1988) states that ‘the merit of oral history is ...that it leads historians to awareness that their activity is inevitably pursued within a social context and with political implications (p.viii)’. He also stresses that ‘history survives as social activity only because it has a meaning for people today (p.viii).’ Oral history plays a large part in the social purpose of history (Thompson, 1988), and ‘it can be used to change the focus of history itself’ by opening up ‘new areas of inquiry;’ breaking down ‘barriers between teachers and students, between generations, between educational institutions and the world outside; and in the writing of history ... it can give back to the people who made and experienced history ... a central place (p.2).’ The interviews of the participants in this research play a very important part because they represent the social history of a particular time in Australia.

Throughout the study period, history was concerned with political situations (Thompson, 1988), with little emphasis placed on ‘the lives of ordinary people’ (p3). Thompson stresses the importance of oral history, as it ‘immediately provides a rich and varied source for the creative historian ... a source quite similar in character to a published autobiography’ (p.5). Yow (1994), points out that there are different terms used for oral history such as: ‘recorded memoir,

life history, the recorded narrative' (p.4), where 'there is someone else involved who inspires the narrator to begin the act of remembering' (p.4). All that was needed was a few prompts to get my participants to remember and relate their experiences concerning their personal and professional lives.

Oral histories are very important in this research as they aim to demonstrate the social history in time and place both in Ireland and in Australia. The participants' oral histories also aim to demonstrate how these women struggled to survive in order to bring education to the growing number of Catholics throughout Victoria between 1930 and 1980.

In this study, four oral histories have been developed into stories that capture the lives and experiences of four female Catholic teachers. These four stories also captured and represented many elements of the other eighteen participants interviewed during this research. While each woman interviewed told her own story, narrative analysis has been used in order to retell their stories (White & Epston, 1990). Narrative analysis (or methods) provides the opportunity to focus on life stories that concern the personal, social and cultural experiences of these women (Chase, 2005). The purpose of selecting and developing the four histories into stories was to assist in organizing and analysing key elements of each, thus making them more accessible to the readers. Data and information from the other eighteen histories was used to provide additional understanding of contexts and lens through which these stories could be viewed (White & Epston, 1990; Cortazzi, 1993).

I heard, recorded, transcribed, read over, analysed, compared, and then re-storied, thus developing a broader knowledge base that I brought to each story. The stories informed one another. In constructing the final four stories, I used multiple lens to develop an understanding of the contexts and contrasts of all

the stories to develop narratives that were authentic and true about the experiences and feelings of the twenty-two individuals.

The interview protocol had two purposes: (1) the questions were used to facilitate the interviews and (2) the list of questions was emailed to a number of participants as it was not possible to meet them all face to face. I developed a list of twenty short open ended questions (See Appendix Two) as part of a series of 'unstructured interviews' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) in order to gain information from the participants. Thompson (1988) refers to oral history as a 'history built around people'. He maintains that it 'allows heroes not just from the leaders, but from the unknown majority of the people' (p.21). Oral history also helps to bring generations together and to understand each other.

Using a tape-recorder, I started with the question 'I am here to learn about your experiences of being a teacher in a Catholic school in Victoria. Can you tell me about that experience?' Another open ended question was 'How did you approach discipline in your role as a teacher?' (Refer to Appendix Two).

The unstructured interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) were typically of one hour duration, although some went longer as some participants remembered many stories and were eager to share them.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The questions at the interviews were open ended questions seeking both epistemological and ontological responses to the professional experiences of the participants (Refer to Appendix Two).

The questions asked in the interviews dealt with the participant's reason/s for leaving Ireland and coming to Australia. For religious sisters, I also asked about their joining a religious order, with the knowledge that they were not allowed to

return home ever. This was a big sacrifice on their part and some of the religious sisters spent a lot of the interview talking about this topic and what it meant to them. I was concerned about these senior women reflecting on their personal histories, some of which could be quite sad and perhaps stressful for them. At the end of the interview I thanked each participant for their time and for taking part in my research study. After each interview, I wrote a personal reflection on each of the interviews, about what was said and on how I felt about it (Cortazzi, 1993).

Prior to commencing the data collection, I submitted an ethics application to the Victoria University Ethics Committee for approval. In this application I described the purpose, methodology including recruitment processes and confidentiality. I included the name and phone number of a psychologist in case any participant required support. It was made clear to each participant that their participation in the interviews was voluntary and they were able to withdraw from the project at any time and unprocessed information would not be used. In order to minimise risks for the participants, I informed (before the interview began) each participant that they could elect not to answer one or more questions or discontinue the interview, if they experienced distress at any time during the interview. My purpose was to pursue questioning in a sensitive manner at all times. In the ethics application, I noted that this research study may benefit the participants by providing an opportunity to reflect on their past successes and their influence and contribution as educators in Catholic schools in Victoria from 1930 to 1980.

This study aimed to gather and preserve oral testimony from selected women teachers about their lives within the historical context of Catholic teaching in Victoria. It also aimed to recognise these teachers' contributions to the Catholic

education sector in Victoria during the period 1930-1980. In retelling their stories, I used their voices to describe, explain and reflect on their personal and professional past experiences.

ME AS THE RESEARCHER

The positionality of the participants' responses meant that I was both an insider and an outsider (Dewey, 1938b, p.139, cited in Cortazzi, 1993). I was an outsider to many as I am not a nun. I had some small insight into religious communal life, having stayed in a convent for several days at a time, but I am not a religious sister. I was an insider because I had a similar background to my participants, coming from a family of nine children and from a farming background with a similar education in Ireland to many of my participants. I was asking questions as an outsider but hearing the responses as an insider (Cortazzi, 1993).

It became apparent early on in the process of interviewing, that I needed to reassess my role as the researcher (Cortazzi, 1993). The location of their stories within the context of my own resulted in my developing understanding of my role as a researcher. This was an important transition for me (Cortazzi, 1993). Initially I had come with a series of questions, aims and objectives to the research. My role as the researcher changed as some participants embraced the opportunity to tell their stories. For me, I almost ceased the need to ask questions and became an active listener. It soon became apparent to me that many of these women's stories mirrored my own. I was in effect, seeking to understand my own role within this cultural phenomenon (Goodson, 2013).

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

According to Riessman (2005) narrative analysis:

refers to a family of approaches to diverse kinds of texts, which have in common a storied form....What makes such diverse texts 'narrative' is sequence and consequence: events are selected, organized, connected

and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience....Narratives represent storied ways of knowing and communicating (p.1).

After listening to the tapes and transcribing the stories as I heard them, I wrote each story in the third person. Then I looked for themes that were developing through each story. After transcribing a few stories I again looked for common themes that occurred throughout all the stories and I recorded these. I identified these themes in a number of ways, such as through vocabulary, common emotional responses, professional responses as well as reflections on the same or similar topics – e.g. curriculum and authority.

When I had finished all twenty-two interviews and completed a reflection on each, I decided to include my own story as part of the research. The reason for documenting my own story was due to the synergy between my experiences and those of my participants. I found similar themes were re-occurring in my story which I believe was due to having similar backgrounds to my participants in Ireland. I was from rural Ireland, where we learned practical and functional skills to survive from season to season on the farm. Not only did we have a common background but we had common values in teaching and common experiences of being part of a diaspora. We also had common attitudes towards education and children.

After writing my own story, I decided that this data was best communicated through narratives. I retold four of the participant' stories in the first person, attempting to capture the emotional, intellectual and spiritual themes, as well as the chronological accounts of these women's lives. I wrote them as narratives in order to present shared truths and to ensure context was developed and explored. I used their voices to assist me in retelling their stories. The purpose of this is to allow the stories to take on a life (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995) and to

provide a shape to each story that made connections between different times, different experiences and different perspectives of life (Atkinson, 1998). The 'memories, experiences and collective values are kept alive by telling others about them' (Atkinson, 1998, p. 8), within the professional experience context of teaching.

In three of the four stories I chose to document, this was a relatively simple task. However, Margaret's story offered particular challenges. Margaret approached the interview as a very functional activity. She had prepared a list of the schools she had worked at, and described her professional experience in chronological and quite clinical terms. It became apparent that she had a different understanding of professional experience from the other participants, and was able to distinguish the differing lenses through which she viewed her experiences (Cortazzi, 1993). I found this separation of the self into different functions and activities to be interesting, and felt it offered a different way of engaging with the questions around professional experience, faith and vocation. Consequently, I included Margaret's story, and told it in the same sparse way in which she related it to me. In Margaret's story I believe the silences, gaps and bald, non-reflective statements tell us a significant amount about the nature of Margaret's experiences and her sense of herself as a teacher and an individual.

Riessman (1993) states that: 'Narrative analysis takes the story as the investigative focus (p.1)'. In these stories the experiences and identities are interdependent. Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992b, p.1, cited in Riessman, 1993) suggest that personal stories 'are the means by which identities may be fashioned' (p.2). The women I interviewed told their stories willingly and with vigour. In doing so they reconnected with their past and with the communities they were part of during their journey to Australia and their work as teachers in

Australia. The life story method of narrative analysis involves interviewing a subject and then retelling their story as if written by them (Riessman, 1993).

The narrative provided the bridge between past and current experiences (Goodson, 2013), and their memories were constructed in the light of who they perceived themselves as then and at the time of the interview. In this way the narrative they constructed created a bridge between different experiences and so provided ways of integrating different elements of the self in the formation of identity.

As a researcher, the challenge was to respect each of these stories and the personhood they contained, but also to identify those elements which were reflective of the professional as well as the personal and faith experiences. In many cases these were intertwined. However, common themes in the ways that experiences were interpreted and reported could be extracted to establish narratives which are respectful of individual stories. These stories offered insights into a group of people with similar yet individual experiences of their worlds (Goodson, 2013).

The consistency with which participants in the research retold their experiences of the journey to Australia, suggests that this was a significant transitional occurrence. Riessman (1993) notes that: 'Respondents narrativize particular experiences in their lives, often where there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society' (p. 3). Riessman's understanding of the role of narrative within the context of a breach is helpful in this context. The trip from Ireland to Australia was indeed a breach – in geographical space, in personal relationships, and in cultural realities. Each of the participants narrates this 'breach'. Some idealize this into an adventure; others see it as time of developing realization of what has been lost. In each case, however, the story is

told in order to bridge that breach, and to establish the basis for the diverse stories that follow. It is the cornerstone of the professional experience, even though in almost every case it precedes the professional experience of teaching.

Stereotypically, the Irish are famous as story tellers (O'Farrell, 1986), and narrative writing is a form of writing taught in schools, and taught by many of these teachers to their students. It is therefore appropriate that this form of writing should also be used to most effectively reflect their experiences as teachers, and the stories they use to construct and understand themselves and their histories (Goodson, 2013).

CONCLUSION

This research study was conducted over a number of years and it was during this time that I began to make connections with my own story, which eventually influenced the focus of my research. The twenty-two participants were very obliging overall and they had their own individual ways of responding to the questions asked. Some remembered events in great detail and others were less consistent and less focussed in their approach, going back and forth as they recalled what happened. The participants placed a lot of trust in me as a researcher and there was a positive rapport and kindred spirit between us.

Twenty-two stories form the basis of the data, plus my own, of Irish Catholic women teachers' professional experiences in Victoria from 1930 to 1980. These stories explain how the participants managed to teach in difficult conditions with large classes of students and very few resources, while maintaining the faith and developing their own identities as women and teachers. These stories were recorded through the means of 'unstructured interviews' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) usually in participants' homes in Australia or in convents in Ireland.

As I interviewed all twenty-two former teachers, I attempted to understand the uniqueness of each of the participants and respect the sincerity of their approaches for the study. From these twenty-two stories, the following four have been explicitly developed (in Chapter 4) into narratives.

CHAPTER 4: STORIES

‘NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE, JUST BELIEVE IN YOURSELF’ - MARGARET

The nature of my interview with Margaret was formal and impersonal. There was a purpose for my visit and that was, according to her, to focus on her professional life as a teacher in Catholic schools in Victoria. She had prepared a list of dates and places where she had taught over the years. This shaped her professional experience, which she had separated out from other landscapes of her life. Her interview was not told as a story - there was little connecting narrative - but one event after another and she was concerned with detail, fact, method and process. Despite her approach, I present her story:

I was born in Ireland in the 1920s, which was a very unsettling time in Ireland but it didn't bother me as life went on as usual.

I left Ireland on 26th November, 1936 by ship, called the 'Mangalia', the last time the ship was on water and it arrived in Sydney on 17th January, 1937. Back then it was common for emigrants to leave Ireland for good and they would never see their families again, something like the ship sailing away for good.

I wanted to go to the missions ... get there and help somebody: that was my sole intention. Before I left Ireland I worked in a small shop in Dublin for a couple of years and people tormented me about getting married. The culture was that by a certain age a female was expected to think about her future as a married woman with children. I had at that stage no plans to get married anytime in the near future so I was not very happy to be asked about my future as I was happy as I was, single and free. People can be annoying when they want to know your business, especially in small towns.

As time went on I decided to think about becoming a nun so I went to visit the Josephite Order in Newmarket in County Cork, where they had a novitiate. This was Mary MacKillop's Order. The Josephites are an Australian order of nuns founded by St. Mary of the Cross MacKillop. I chose this religious group because this order is different to other orders of nuns in that there was no 'layered' system, which means that all sisters took turns doing chores around the convent such as cleaning and cooking. We were all considered equal, all doing the work for God. In other orders such as the Mercy or Brigidines, there was a class system, where only the 'lay' sisters did the cleaning and cooking and they were at the bottom of the ladder and usually remained there. The other sisters were called 'choir' sisters and they had a profession such as teaching or nursing. I did not like the class system so I decided to join the Josephites.

There were seven girls in our group who went together to Australia from Newmarket, County Cork. We were young, some girls only fifteen or sixteen years old, with very little experience of the world and we were looking forward to our first trip outside Ireland on a ship 'to the missions' in Australia. Being young, everything was an adventure, so we only thought of going to a new country, Australia, and we didn't give any thought to when we might be coming back. It was sad to leave our families but we were young and we didn't dwell on it for long. Why should we when we had a big adventure with lots of excitement before us?

On the ship there were, in all, fifty-two girls, including Mercy sisters and three priests who said Mass every day. We celebrated Christmas at Goa, an island near India and there was a big celebration there for all Catholics. Goa is a very Catholic country and they have big celebrations on the Catholic holy days, for instance for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on 8th December, they

have three days of celebrations. It is a tropical island so the weather was hot and sunny, much different to the frost and cold air in Ireland. In Goa the people dressed up for the big celebration at Christmas and they were very friendly and happy. We joined in with the natives and they gave us gifts and they came aboard the ship and we had a great time together. This was the highlight of our trip to Australia.

We arrived at Fremantle in Western Australia, docked there and we were met by nuns on 4th January, 1937. Then we went back on the ship again for a trip to Adelaide. We got off there and we met the local nuns and spent a whole day with them. Then we got back on the ship and we sailed for Melbourne, where we stopped off and we were met by more nuns who took us to the convent in East Malvern. We met Dr. Mannix in Melbourne which was a big event as he had a great reputation among the Catholics in all of Australia, especially the Irish Catholics.

After that we went on to Sydney to train as nuns and also as teachers. I did Intermediate Certificate and Leaving Certificate there in order to get ready for my teaching qualification.

Australians were very friendly. The climate was very humid and hot in January especially after coming from an Irish winter. The heavy clothes worn by us, nuns, made life unbearable in the hot conditions. Our nuns' habits were made from heavy woollen material which was suitable for the Irish climate but unbearable in the heat and stickiness of the Australian summer weather. The headdress we wore was uncomfortable and created enormous challenges and discomfort for us especially in the humid conditions. The clothes worn by us, nuns were inappropriate for such a warm climate but we didn't have any say in what clothes we could wear.

Accommodation was no problem as there was always a convent to stay in, so we did not have to worry about organising a hotel to stay in or about having enough money to pay for it.

As a postulant I had to study hard for three years, in the following years 1937, 1938 and 1939. In 1940 I professed to be a nun and I started my teaching training which took twelve months. My first class was fifth Grade of thirty to forty students – a scholarship class of boys, which I had to get ready for the Brothers school.

We, the nuns, taught boys and girls together in the convent school usually up to Grade four or five and then the boys moved on to an all-boys school run by the Christian Brothers, De La Salle Brothers or Marist Brothers. Scholarships were awarded to boys who did well in examinations and whose families could not afford to pay for their secondary school education. If their results were excellent the Brothers' school would provide them with free education and board if it was a boarding school. The Brothers were very keen to get the most talented and enthusiastic boys so they could mould them and give them a good education in order for them (the boys) to go on to university and choose careers in the professions e.g. medicine, law, politics, finance, banking and teaching. Many of them were children of poor Irish families and this was an opportunity for the children to do better than their parents and move up the social ladder in society, which many of them did back then.

I had a Grade one class and a Grade two class, which was a First Holy Communion class. I had three lots of Communion classes. Conditions were bad with holes in the windows and classes of thirty boys and girls.

In 1942 there were no lay teachers in schools. I taught in Brunswick for a few years and then moved around a lot to different schools in Melbourne suburbs and also in the rural towns.

I taught in Essendon where they had air raid shelters in the basement during the Second World War. We practised air raid drills moving in and out of the basement shelters during the war in case any bomb was dropped on us. The war seemed to be just another challenge which we took in our stride and carried on regardless of what was going on around us.

Then after the war was over there was an influx of migrants from Europe and later more migrants came from the Eastern Bloc countries. The Catholic schools were overflowing with migrant students due to refusal from State schools. These migrants could not speak English so we taught the Australian students English first and then the Australian students taught the migrants English. The migrants practised their English in the playground during lunch breaks with the Australian kids.

There were big numbers of students in schools – one hundred and twenty students, with two nuns. I remember that Frankston was one of the difficult schools where the children were difficult to manage, a rough area and it was tough teaching Grades five and six. The Catholic school served as a church on Sunday for Mass because the local community could not afford to build a Catholic Church.

I moved around a lot, usually one year at each school, from Frankston to Ouyen, to Leongatha and then to Sunbury and Lancefield. Some schools were established by the nuns; two or three nuns by themselves would go out to a

small community as true pioneers and get the community involved in setting up a school for the local Catholic children.

Vatican II brought many changes especially with the gradual introduction of lay teachers to the schools. It made no difference to me. I did things just like I had done for years. Some of us older nuns carried on as before as we did not like change. We were used to following rules and having certain people in charge, the authoritarian approach. This was the approach I used in teaching my classes also. We, as nuns, were not used to having free time to do as we pleased, so some were confused by their new independence and they did not like the changes brought about by Vatican II. Many of us older nuns kept to our old ways and we did not change, even continuing to wear the heavy habits as we had done for years.

When I was teaching I kept the scholarship class back after school to do extra teaching until 5 o'clock, as this was their only chance to succeed and get into secondary school. It was important that the good students were given a chance to get scholarships to a secondary school, as they could not afford to pay the fees, so I gave them extra tuition.

I was principal for a number of years at two different schools. When I was asked to take it on I couldn't refuse as I was used to doing what I was told and I rose to the occasion, no matter what it was. It was just another job and I was asked to do it and so I did. I did not question authority.

As regards discipline I never had a problem. I just reported any bad behaviour to the mother of the child and everything was fine then. I worked in partnership with the parent, who shared respect for the teacher because I was a nun.

I believed that all children had a right to an education and should be able to read, write and 'do sums', which prepared them for life after school.

I also prepared them for life. I taught the boys how to do woodwork, by first learning it myself from a book and then I taught it to the boys at school, so that they could work as a carpenter in the local town. I used the motto 'if you see a need do something about it', from the foundress of our order, Mary MacKillop , and I used this idea to get the boys motivated and interested in making things with their hands, that were useful. I was very good at fixing things around the convent and I would try anything. Some boys were very good with their hands so the woodwork classes gave them an opportunity to learn new skills and many of them enjoyed these classes especially those who were not academically minded but who were hands-on and practical in their approach to life. This craftwork also kept the boys busy and out of mischief. The older boys made a doll's house and a Christmas crib, which they cut out and varnished. The materials and equipment needed for a doll's house and a Christmas crib was cheap to buy for my class. The boys also made stairs and then they went on to the technical school (in Morwell) to train as carpenters. They got their first lot of training from a nun at primary school, which probably got them interested in doing carpentry as a trade, so they were set up for employment for life. This made me very proud because I had given them a start in life to pursue a trade that they were interested in.

Examiners came to check out our teaching, but I didn't worry too much about them as I knew that what I was doing was for the good of the children.

There was a change in the curriculum with the introduction of sport and light exercises. We encouraged the students to do lots of running to keep fit so we gave instructions and they followed them.

I had a trip to Ireland in 1974, my first trip since I came out in the 1930s as we had to wait our turn for a free trip home to Ireland. It was a very exciting time for me to travel by plane and to meet all my cousins after such a long time.

When lay teachers came into the Catholic schools in 1972 funding was also introduced as 'we, the nuns would do without but not lay teachers'. I suppose they had their families to support.

Fees were fifty pence a week, some paid sixpence or whatever they could afford. Others paid nothing or supplied farm produce for us to eat. Mary MacKillop believed that all children should be educated, rich and poor alike.

We used spelling books, which were printed at Meehan's in North Melbourne for the students and we did lots of spelling tests. Most of the learning was by rote, learning things off, the same with learning maths tables, lots of mental arithmetic tests.

There were changes in teaching in 1988 with the introduction of computers, a new teaching tool in the classroom and children were introduced to them by playing computer games in the classrooms, which they picked up very quickly.

I had a very worthwhile and rewarding life as a nun and a teacher and I tried to have a positive influence on my students. I did what I was asked to do in the circumstances and I made the best of all the many different experiences in all the different schools that I taught in and I encouraged my students to believe that: 'nothing is impossible, just believe in yourself'.

GOING ON THE MISSIONS - MARY

When I rang Mary to explain my study and to ask if she would be prepared to take part in it, she was willing to help me but she set the conditions. We had only a couple of hours in which to do the interview as she had made plans for the rest of the afternoon. The nature of my interview with Mary started out in a very formal way. I was the researcher, asking the questions and Mary was the interviewee answering without giving too much away. As we moved into more philosophical questions about her life she started to relax and spoke more freely. After tea and sandwiches and biscuits and about two hours of talking I had quite an insight into Mary's interesting and very rich life. She gave me a couple of books to borrow, which helped with my study. Here is her story.

On December 12th, 1956, I arrived in Australia with the sole intention of entering a Brigidine congregation as a postulant. I was only seventeen. I went to the local Brigidine school in Ireland and I entered a few months after doing the Leaving Certificate. I came out under the £10 POM scheme with a friend of mine. We were lay passengers and entered out here. I had a vocation to enter the religious life. I believed this was what God wanted of me and for me. I was very excited about coming to Australia to join the order.

Along with four nuns - two Presentation and two Mercy, seven postulants from other religious orders, twenty-three young priests from seminaries in Thurles, County Tipperary, Carlow and All Hallows - all religious orders - and two Patrician brothers, we left Ireland on November 1st and we all travelled by ship. It was a very interesting journey, stopping off in London, with a change of plan about it being too dangerous to go through the Suez Canal and instead we went around by the Cape of Good Hope. We spent six weeks on board the ship and had a wonderful time. Brother Rodan was in charge of our group. There was

protection in being with this group – all Catholic, all travelling together, all committed to doing God's work in a new land. We were all excited and we didn't have the same restraints we might have had back at home.

In Australia we arrived in Port Melbourne where we were met by two Brigidines and the Superior of the Brigidines and we were taken to Malvern to the Novitiate House. My first impression was that Australia was a very advanced mission country. I was amazed that everything was so advanced and extremely modern and affluent. I thought it would be like Africa. I thought I'd be in a poor country – we were coming to help, to do God's work. But the people here looked better off than our own families in Ireland.

The city was like any city but the houses had lovely gardens. There were all different houses, not rows of all the same but individual. It was so different to what I expected. I was confused, really. Why did they tell us we were coming to the Missions when we were coming to this organized, cared for, affluent country? The people were friendly and I knew two other postulants, Catherine, who came in August 1954 and Mary who came with me.

I came in December so the climate was quite warm and the sun was very bright – dazzling! So different from Ireland! We had no problem with accommodation as that was all provided by the nuns. Straight away after arriving, we were put into postulant clothes and our own clothes that we had, were locked away. So we became part of the order, rather than being individuals. I lost something when they took my clothes. I wasn't sad – it was what I had wanted – but nonetheless, I knew that something changed when I started wearing the habit. I started being identified with the order, not as myself. I had always been God's servant, but now my clothes told everyone else I was God's servant too. It was like putting the old world into the new world. The clothes were heavy and not

appropriate for the climate in summer in Australia. The only difference between these and the clothes worn in Ireland was the colour, but no difference to the fabric or the cut. It marked the beginning of getting into a routine.

We had a special celebration on 1st February, which is St Brigid's Day.

Postulants arrived for 1st February but we had arrived early by ship so we had to wait for the new group so we could all start training together. School started at the beginning of February and I started training at the Training College in Malvern. Brigidines had their own training college, which had been going for two years. It started in 1954, on the convent premises.

It was a system of training on the job. We were taught on the job. There were sixteen postulants and 40 student-teachers training together. Those who had done the training, taught. It was training, not education. They were teaching us how to be teachers, but not educating us about teaching.

The training was for primary teaching and Sister Margaret ran the Training College and a science teacher gave lectures in science. All trainee teachers did teaching rounds in the local parish school which was co-educational, as well as at Kildara, a private Brigidine school for all girls.

In the convent you could be a 'house nun' or you could do teaching. In my case I had no choice. Teaching was my only option, as exam results in Leaving Certificate (VCE equivalent) set you up for teaching. That was your entrée. The house nuns hadn't done Leaving Certificate, so it was a system of hierarchy based on opportunity, really. Looking back, I can see it was a class system. Education really mattered if you didn't want to spend your life cleaning! I think that I was a nun first – my calling, and then I was on the missions – my place, and then I was a teacher – my task. I didn't really choose any of these – you

don't choose a vocation, you're called. And after that other people made decisions about me and for me and that was fine because I had a vocation that required me to be of service.

I missed Ireland and my family dreadfully. I am the third eldest in a family of twelve children. The biggest thing was the loneliness, it nearly broke my heart. There was no visit to Ireland, you came out (to Australia) for life. That was the rule but I had not taken in what it meant at seventeen years old. How could I? My little brothers and sisters were growing up, and I realized I would never know them as adults – they would always be children in my mind. And I think when you can't have something you understand how much you valued it. When I left my family, I didn't really appreciate them – they were always there – I took them for granted. And then I had this growing realization that I would never see them again, and the loneliness and the loss were enormous.

General Council had a meeting every six years and a new Council was elected. Getting on with authority was a big problem for me and I got into trouble for not toeing the line and giving wrong answers some of the time, as they were not the answers the head nun wanted to hear, so I was punished and sent to the end of the line. Later I was nominated as head novice but often I was demoted because of my attitude and my 'obedience wasn't up to scratch'. I wasn't the 'right' sort of leader! The 'right' leader would follow all the rules without question – they were a perfect follower really. But I couldn't do that. It set me up time and time again for arguments and discipline.

The second year was called the Spiritual year so I could teach RE in schools. In my third year I was teaching under supervision from another nun, where I had to prepare my timetables and work program. At the end of the third year I was professed in December 1959, when I got the black veil, which was my first

profession. The veil identified my status – it kept me in a particular group and told everyone where I fitted into the larger picture.

I had to do six years before my final profession – six years as a nun, not as a teacher. My first teaching assignment was in Geelong, at Our Lady's, to teach sixty-five Grade three and fours, a composite class, and I had no idea how to teach a composite class. I was thrown in at the deep end. I would not have survived if not for the help of two Irish nuns there. They helped me a lot, as there were no books, no resources, no coloured chalk, nothing for drawings, only a map on the wall, so we did the 3 Rs, Reading Writing and arithmetic all day long. Once a week we did singing, health, SOSE (Study of Social Education) and sport exercises.

The curriculum was very narrow and I had no option but to stay behind every day until 5pm at school, to fill the whole blackboard with written work; spelling, grammar and maths. There was no way of copying, no photocopier, and no gestetners. Big schools had gestetners, but not ours. There were no materials for craft work or handwork. We used to get the kids to bring cardboard boxes and magazines, anything with a bit of coloured paper in it and we would devise lessons around that. All the time it was a test of our ingenuity – what could we come up with? How could we make this work? Apparently someone thought that you only needed a teacher, a blackboard and some white chalk for children to learn. The reality was that you wanted the children to learn and you wanted them to be happy. So you had to always be one step ahead, thinking about how to get them organized and interested.

So all the children had the commitment, intelligence, compassion and wit of their teachers and us, as teachers, had to work within fairly strict rules. We had to follow the rules of the Brigidines order and do what we were told with very

little if any resources. As a young teacher I suffered from frustration and pain of powerlessness as a professional.

My first year was 1960. In my second year in Geelong, I was given the option of a composite class or eighty Grade fours in one class. In 1961 we had an influx of migrants, all Catholics and they all finished up in Catholic schools and no parish priest ever thought to say 'no'. The parish priest had this idea that the children needed a Catholic education so we would provide it. But he didn't have to work in the classrooms with eighty children! Eighty children and no resources!

They had no English and you said "so and so has arrived from Hungary and you take him outside and tell him the name of things in the yard". There was no time with eighty kids in the class, students taught each other. So in some ways it was like a family – older children taught younger children. It relied on the children being interested and wanting to help.

It was different back then, the students had a Victorian reader and a school paper, which came out once a month – each student had a reader and an exercise book to go with each subject, and a maths book. You made up your lessons around these books. They were deprived, compared to what students have now. We had nothing, absolutely nothing. We didn't even have a gestetner back then. There was this expectation that we'd make do – that everything would be alright, but very little thought as to our experiences as teachers.

After two years, I was sent to Beechworth and that was similar, except the classes were a little bit smaller because it was a country town. I mostly had a Grade three and four composite class for two years there.

Then after that I was sent back down to the city to Mentone, where I taught at St Patrick's School, and lived at Kilbreda, which was a big boarding school at the

time, so we did boarding duty at night time. We all went out to different primary schools during the day. About six or seven primary schools, were serviced from Kilbreda. We walked across from the convent at Kilbreda. I spent two years there. My first year was with Grade five with fifty plus students. And in the second year I had Grade six class with sixty-five students in it. That was a very good year. I had some great kids that year. I still remember some of their names. It was a really happy year.

After two years at Mentone, I went to Wangaratta for one year. In those years I was moving around all the time. The second year at Mentone was so good and I wonder if it's because I got to know the children and their families a bit. But the general policy seemed to be to move us every year. We never got to put down any roots, it always felt transitory. You had fifty children to learn their names and a bit about them and then you were moved again. There was no understanding that knowing the children and the community can make you a better teacher, or that feeling like you belong might make you more resourceful. It was a strategy so that we didn't get attached – just do the work. But sometimes the work is about being attached.

Then I got a letter from the Provincial to say you will go next year and take charge of St Bernard's School, in Wangaratta. I had not had enough experience in the classroom to take on the job as principal of a school. I had no training in anything to do with managing people or managing a school. I was just thrown in at the deep end and you just got on with it, and you did it. You didn't have a choice. There was no freedom. You just did what was asked of you. Decisions were made for me and I more or less did what I was told. I was a Principal at 26 years old.

The Provincial suggested that I should go to university, which I didn't want to do as I saw how my friend and other nuns had to struggle to teach all day, then study at night, but were still required to go to bed at 10pm every night. In order to go to university in Melbourne you had to have a foreign language, and as I had not studied one I had to go to South Australia to do a university course there. Some nuns took ten years to get a degree, doing one subject a year. It was cruel to work and study at the same time.

It was unfair how the brothers were given a year off to study and nuns were treated differently. We had to work full time, with no time off. We didn't understand that – how it was different for them. Was their study more important? Was teaching in their schools more important? It was frustrating to be struggling and to be treated differently, and to not have that struggle even recognized. We also did our own cleaning and later our own cooking so I took over as bursar, taking charge of cooking and shopping, while I studied. I did a good job at managing everything.

We as nuns had no choice in the subjects we were given to teach, whereas lay teachers had a choice. We had to learn the subject and then teach it. It didn't matter if we had any confidence or any natural ability in this subject, or in something else. If we were told to teach it we had to teach it. That was that. There were no choices involved.

In Adelaide we had to put on a play for the Catholic Schools Drama competition and we were only allowed to practise for two hours every Saturday morning. While the Superior was away we practiced all day on Saturday and we came second in the competition. It was unrealistic what was expected. We needed that practice time. Just like we needed to know the subjects we were teaching and to be interested in them. So sometimes we would bend the rules, like

rehearsing all day on the Saturday. It was the only way. Otherwise we couldn't have done our best. I wanted the children to feel it was worthwhile, and that they could do well at this. And we did – I was very pleased. But the Superior wouldn't have been – if she'd known!

We set up scholarships classes for students to study English and History on a Saturday --- and fifteen out of thirty got them. Many families couldn't afford a good education. Scholarships were important – they were the way to a better education and to a better place in society – a scholarship could keep you away from becoming a cleaner! It was an important part of what we did – to offer this opportunity. Getting a scholarship really could change students' lives. I thought it really mattered because it wasn't just about learning, it was about how children could use that learning, how they and their families could have a better future through accessing good education. It was the way for Catholic families to rise from blue collar workers to white collar workers.

At the beginning of 1970 I was sent to Kyabram, a tiny primary school, where I stayed for first term only, and it was so hot I fainted in the classroom teaching Grades four, five and six in one room. We were still wearing habits then, the classrooms were overcrowded and it was a very dry heat.

Then in 1970 I went home to Ireland for a holiday with a friend, another Brigidine nun. It was the first time that I met my youngest brother, who was eleven years old. The family had changed, over nearly fourteen years. Six were married with children. I had been to only one wedding there, after I arrived. I missed out on big events in their lives, like 21st birthdays.

I stayed for three months catching up with nieces and nephews. I was the nun who had come back from the missions. But really I was me, the sister, who had

missed them all so much. It was terrible for both of us to come back. I could not leave my family, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews and the thought of all the family celebrations that I missed out on over the years was all too much for me. The family was growing and I wanted to be part of it. I missed the life that I had growing up in Ireland, the countryside and the way of life and the freedom to make my own decisions and do what I liked to do without asking for permission and the freedom to go places in my own time.

Devastating! It wrenched my heart. How could I leave them all again – a second time – this time with my eyes wide open? To miss the celebrations, the births, the weddings, and the birthdays – I had lived a life without these. And I didn't want to go back to that.

My friend was in the middle of doing her degree as well as teaching senior students but also she had to face exams herself at the end of the year. I came back and I just couldn't settle down. When I came back, the whole experience of meeting up with family again and the whole thing of not knowing if I would ever see them again was traumatic --- all too much for me then.

After I got back from Ireland I went to Adelaide to see friends and I stayed there for another three years before I left the order of nuns in 1973. I had two wonderful superiors, Sr. Pauline and Sr. Mary, both beautiful women, normal and kind human beings who treated me with trust. Family was more important. I needed to go back to Ireland and get to know my family. I really went home intending to stay at home. The nuns were wonderful to me when I left the order and gave up being a nun. There was no hostility from my congregation of nuns. With the earlier ones who left the order, there was a lot of secrecy and ill feeling, but by the time I left the order, really the people were wonderful to me. Mind you I didn't get any financial support. My family stepped in and had to help me. I got

\$200 when I left and some clothing. I had to wait for my brother's money to arrive to be able to buy my airfare home. They probably would have given me the airfare home but my brother did it. I left the order and the convent and went straight home. The minute I got to London, it was summer time here, I had no winter clothes. It was freezing cold and my sister-in-law took me shopping in London to buy a whole new wardrobe. I was decked out like a queen. My family supported me. I stayed with my brother and then I went home to Ireland for Christmas.

Then I came back to England in January 1974 and I looked for a job there. I taught in a Catholic school in Woodford Green, in Essex. I lived with my brother in a lovely house in England. The family gave me a car so I could get around. I had great trouble getting my teaching certificate recognized in England. Then eventually I got full qualified status there but I didn't stay there and in August 1974 I went back to Ireland.

Back here in Australia they were crying out for teachers, they couldn't get them and so Sr. Teresa, who was Principal at Killester – well, she heard I was thinking of coming back and she wrote and offered me a job and I wrote back, because nobody who had left the order had gone back and taught with them and I was a bit dubious about whether or not the Provincial would be a bit put out by it. So I wrote back to Teresa and said 'look, how will Margaret feel about this?' and she wrote back and said 'I'm employing you, not Margaret'. So I came back and I broke new ground for many other people who followed after me, because a lot of them came back then and taught afterwards with the Brigidines. I returned because there was a need for teachers here in Australia and because life in Ireland wasn't working either. My only role for most of my life was as a nun and as a teacher and I had known nothing else as a young

woman. This was my identity, including the clothing that I wore and the power I got from my position as a principal and these things shaped my life in all the previous years. This is who I was and it shaped my life. I knew no other life but that of a nun and a teacher. I had to use all my strength to reframe my life and my thinking, and to be myself, which took a lot of courage.

Vatican II came in 1965. It really didn't filter down to us and we didn't really get the documents; we didn't read these documents, but we started having all these meetings and in-services and God knows what, to try and implement the stuff. That was a really big thing but I think, looking back on it, a lot of it went over our heads. Well, you read the document but they were all so theological and we weren't really trained in it. We really didn't understand any of it. We were teaching religion in the school but we hadn't really had any specific training bar what we got in the novitiate. The biggest change of all in Vatican II was that it asked individual Catholics to be responsible for their relationship with God - but we weren't equipped to do it, and it required a huge mind shift. We hadn't done any courses in theology as such. Subsequently I did a whole year in Christ College but we had very little access to staff development or anything along the way, so my professional experience was very limited. Perhaps, that was because it was secondary to being a nun, or secondary to being a Catholic.

So in addition to those two schools, I was put in charge of a school in Kyabram. It was only a small school but I was thrown in at the deep end with two primary schools and told to run them without any training and I think I did a fairly good job in terms of organizing them. But I really didn't know. I suppose you didn't have a lot of contact at that stage with parents, like you didn't have parent/teacher meetings the way you have them now. They were just starting to come in at that stage. How could I tell if I was doing a good job? It was down

to how it felt – did it seem okay? Did people seem happy? There was no way of asking – I was the principal – I was the authority figure and people didn't question that.

There was very little change in the curriculum in all that time, as far as I can remember. We just went on teaching, which was very repetitive, monotonous and unchallenging. This was a time when we thought we could actually know everything - pre information explosion. Inquiry was probably non-existent in schools - why inquire if content transfer was quicker and all you needed? The students didn't need to learn to think or analyse. They just needed to remember information - so the whole idea of education was completely different to what it is like today with inquiry-based learning now the main focus for teaching and learning in schools. You had a few more aids, like we had those American reading programs, SRA boxes of books, Chancel reading stuff, and the Cuisenaire rods — we did a course on that at the University of Adelaide for a whole year, once a week, upgrading on how to teach modern Maths. This was all for primary.

I never had a problem with discipline and I still don't, even with large numbers. When the day comes when I can't get kids to do what I tell them I'm out of there, when my discipline doesn't work anymore. No problem, I could still control a large group. When I came back in from Ireland, after leaving, I came to Killester. I thought, really, I was only coming to fill in from August till the end of the year. And then, of course, Teresa said 'Come back next year' and then it was about a year or two after that the lady who was in charge of the Junior School at Killester was leaving to have a baby so Teresa twisted my arm and asked me to take over the Junior School coordinating, which I did. By then I felt that I was a

lot older and more competent, with many years of experience behind me. Thus experience rather than PD or training informed my competency.

Between 1974 and 1980 I continued to teach at Killester. I went back to study too. I lived with my sister for a while till she got married, and with a friend who had also left the order. In 1981, I went back to Kilbreda, where I was Junior School Co-ordinator for four years. I'd been studying – a BA at Deakin and then a B.Ed. at Monash and a Grad Dip in RE at Christ College. And then I began my Masters at Monash, but I never finished it. I'm now doing emergency teaching at Catholic schools.

I always loved teaching, and when I improved my qualifications I moved up to teaching senior students. I felt I could be a role model there, and I related well to those students. I tried to tell them that women can learn anything, and can impart new knowledge. That learning, being educated as girls, would empower them give them control of their own lives. I wanted them never to be afraid of changing their minds. I wanted them to feel strong enough in themselves to get out of bad relationships, to take control over their lives. That's the history of women – that we are the creators of our own lives. There's an old Irish saying – don't let people put you down. Well, I wanted those girls to know that. I wanted them to know that they must never let anyone put them down, that they could control their own destiny. Education is important in life – for them and for their families. Education is the way to move up in the world and have choices. Families could do well if they were educated, if they valued education.

My father's philosophy was to educate all the family as far as the end of secondary school and after that they would pay their own way at university, if they wanted to continue their education. My father was a representative for an

oil company, not very well off with twelve children to look after. My mother was very good at managing the household, a full time housewife.

My brother got a scholarship and became an orthodontist, managing the biggest business in all the British Isles, in Ranelagh, Dublin. My belief is that through education you can do things and go anywhere in the world. If students were bright I would encourage them to work hard and succeed academically. With the poor or slow learners, I would give them extra help.

I was an English teacher who loved reading and language and I inspired in the students a love for reading. I used to read part of a story to get them interested then I said go to the library and finish reading it yourself. 'You're responsible for your own learning' was my motto.

My brother set up a foundation to help others gain Leaving and Matriculation in England. He had a real respect for education and what it could do for people. He wanted to help people to become better educated. He helped schools too – that was his contribution - looking after poorer kids in Northern Ireland. So it was in my blood to value education.

I was a nun for seventeen years, from 1956 to 1973. Seventeen years a child, and then seventeen years a nun. When I left I'd been a nun for half my lifetime. Us nuns, we were tough women, survivors. Everything around me changed in those years. Vatican II came in and there were fewer nuns and more laity and everything became very family oriented. I had given up my family. And although I'd reunited with them it was at a great cost. I never really settled. It was like I was caught between two worlds. I reclaimed my place in the family, but I missed the nuns. I still miss them. The first Christmas was so lonely. The loss, the loneliness was enormous. There was this empty place in me where the nuns

had been – a whole way of life, gone. Each year now I go back and see the sisters in Adelaide – I catch up with them, and hear about their health and how things are.

So that's how it is for me. I'm pleased and proud I was a teacher. I gave opportunities to students and to families – I helped them move up in the world. And I hope I taught some of those girls to take control, to demand it. There's been a lot of sorrow in my life – leaving people and then never quite finding them again. But I'm not sorry about the teaching. That was always where I belonged.

THE ADVENTURER - HANNAH

I rang Hannah because I had received her name and phone number from a previous participant. I explained who I was and what I was doing with my research and I asked her if she was interested in taking part in my study. Then I organised a suitable time to conduct the interview at her house. The nature of my interview with Hannah was very pleasant. She welcomed me into her home and we sat down to have a comfortable chat over a cup of tea and some biscuits. She chatted on about her life telling her story about herself, her travels and her family, not always in chronological order, but as she remembered things. There was no hesitancy about having her story recorded: she wanted to talk and help me out with my research. It was like catching up with an old friend. Most of the interviews up to this point had gone for about an hour but with Hannah it went for over two hours because she asked me about my life and we chatted on about America, as both of us had been there. This is her story.

My parents lived in Co. Meath near Dublin, so it was easy to visit them, while at university in Dublin, before I came to Australia. One of my subjects that I studied at University was geography as I was always interested in travelling.

I graduated with a teaching qualification from University College Dublin, (UCD) a B. A. degree in history. I did two subjects for honours. It was difficult for women, as geography graduates were limited to men only, and there were jobs for men only. At the time, that's just how it was. There was no concept of gender equality – that would have been ludicrous.

In Ireland, before I came to Australia, I taught in Navan, a town in County Meath, at the Mercy College there teaching Years 7-10 equivalent. University College Dublin set up classes at night to cater for teachers of geography with one year

course on a Friday night, which was very helpful for women who wanted to do extra study.

I came to Australia in October, 1964. My great grandfather's sister's family came from Kilaloe in Co. Clare, and came out to Australia in the 1850s during the Gold Rush. They became well educated in Australia and they corresponded with the family in Ireland over the years. In the late 1950s, a third cousin, Brenda Niall was studying; an academic visited my family in Ireland; an uncle wrote to us. There was a steady stream of contact. Australia was a place where family was. The connections had been there for over a hundred years.

Families sponsored cousins from Ireland to Australia; one boy was brought here in his early teens to educate him. After finishing university I said: 'Why not me?' and I came straight to my cousins. As I said, they were already here from Gold Rush days, more distant relatives. I came more for an adventure and a working holiday. I was not interested in the religious life. My life was more a romantic idea of going to distant lands like my cousins did before me. The Irish have a name for it: 'the wanderlust'. My idea was more about getting my share of adventure, perhaps connecting with part of the family that had a certain romance.

I had a medical check with a valid TB Certificate, which was necessary when coming into a new country for fear of spreading the disease. My journey was by plane on a round the world trip. New York first to visit a cousin there, a teacher of history at Fordham University, then on to San Francisco and Waco in Texas. I visited schools and my cousin, now a 92 year old nun, living in Scotland. Then I travelled on to Hawaii, where I stayed for a relaxing time, then took the plane to Sydney and later onto Melbourne, where I was met by my cousins at

Melbourne Airport. It certainly was a great adventure for me, going to many different places and meeting cousins in each of them.

The Melbourne cousins lived in Kew and as I was travelling through Carlton and Collingwood I remember that the conditions were not good in these suburbs. I thought that Australia was a rich country and I was disappointed that the houses were dilapidated and run down and it could be seen that the people who lived in these houses were very poor, from the clothes they were wearing. I expected the climate to be warmer but it was cold so my cousins lit a fire, as I stayed at my mother's cousins' house and we opened windows to the south.

People were very friendly, especially the cousins, a 22-year old cousin looked after me. I was interested in education, and in learning about the environment. There was lots of native vegetation nearby. We would go there and look at the plants. I wanted to soak up the things that were different, like the plants, and I liked open spaces.

I met a lot of families of Irish descent, like an Irish ghetto. They stuck together and they went to certain schools, Catholic of course. Then they intermarried and all the families stayed together and grew up together and they formed Catholic Irish groups among themselves. They kept to themselves and they did not mix much with other nationalities or other cultures. It was like having a little Ireland in Kew all to themselves. Over time as they became rich they could afford more material things and they were able to stay on at school longer and if they were lucky they could get scholarships to help them with their secondary schooling and pay their fees. With good results and great interest and motivation they went on to tertiary education, much to the delight of their parents and grandparents. Once they became well educated they passed this love of learning and success on to the next generation and after some time they had

broken through to professions such as lawyers and doctors. The suburb of Kew was fairly Catholic and the Jesuit curate in the Sacred Heart Church in Kew was an Irish priest, Father Egan. My cousin, Desmond Niall played a big part in the Catholic community. They looked out for the Irish and they made sure that they were not alone or lonely, a very close-knit group in the Kew community. (Even today there's an Irish shop in Kew, where you can buy Irish food and Irish tea, still catering for the Irish community there).

The Gorman family came out here in the 1830s. They were cousins and lived in the Riverina. In the 1950s there was a huge demand for wool so sheep farmers were going well. I lived in Robinvale and Mildura and there was unbelievable heat, up to 105°F. As I am a very sociable person I got a job after two weeks, teaching. It was easy to get a job teaching. In 1965, I taught at Loreto College in Mandeville, Toorak, a Catholic school. I had a job there for a couple of weeks. After two weeks relieving I got a job teaching Year nine and ten secondary students. It was an all girls' school, where the girls were well-behaved. Here I taught history, Asian studies, concentrating on the history of China and Indonesia. I followed a book with the students reading and answering questions as we read. I also taught geography, concentrating on climate and this was taught, again, from a book. In Australia I taught similar subjects and similar year levels to those I taught in Ireland. I taught geography by preparing for classes with lots of geography books to get the information. I remember teaching 'contour lines'!

I then travelled around Australia, to Perth and on to Kalgoorlie. I got a job for a term at Scarborough and due to the fact that I had a B.A. and a Diploma in Education, I could get a job easily in any part of Australia. I taught at a co-educational State school in Scarborough in 1966. I signed up with agencies for

skilled and non-skilled jobs and they gave me a job. I had generally no trouble getting a job teaching wherever I went around Australia, as Irish qualifications were accepted wherever I went.

Conditions and accepted behaviours have changed over time. In secondary schools run by religious orders they allowed me to leave school, when I had finished teaching my classes, which is very different now.

At one school in Perth where I taught there were 1200 students. They were totally streamed – vocational or academic. Some learned trades and they studied different subjects. Secondary subjects were taught to Year six and seven kids. They studied general subjects, neither trade nor academic. There was a Year ten remedial class, which I taught.

In general, conditions in schools were very bad with no heating in schools, especially in Mandeville, in Toorak. With a poor heating system this meant that the winter was very cold in classrooms and I had to wear warm clothes to keep warm. The pay conditions were no different to Ireland as women were paid women's rate but I was amazed at my pay cheque as I was earning twice as much as in Ireland, so I got a nice surprise when I got my first pay. In teaching, equal pay came later for women, even though we did the same work. It wasn't very fair.

In the Catholic system, especially in the primary schools, many Australian teachers were not trained, or were trained by nuns. They left school in Year 11 and did no Leaving Certificate. Basically girls trained under those conditions. On the other hand Irish women had two years training in a trained system. There were more women teachers in the State school system in Victoria. In the Catholic primary school system in Victoria the parish priest ran the school and

the secondary school was the same as the high school system. In secondary school pay and conditions for secondary teachers were reasonable.

There was no superannuation in the Catholic system in Victoria at all and also there were no maternity leave payments or leave without pay. There was an attitude that expected you to leave when you looked pregnant.

The school equipment depended on fees – well off schools had resources but poorer schools were short, so it depended on what the school was like, economically. In Ireland and in Australia the government brought in grants for science rooms to be built, to help educate all students in science, as science became popular after the Americans landed on the moon in 1969.

In 1964, in Ireland I worked/taught on Saturday mornings at school until 1pm, but not here in Victoria. Here in Australia I worked harder to get everything covered because I had to get it all done in five days instead of five and a half. In one sense it was good to have a full day off on a Saturday and then again there was a struggle with time to get the curriculum covered.

I also worked in the public service in 1966 in the decimal currency Board, which was a temporary job before going to Perth. I had to take an oath of allegiance to the Queen, which surprised me coming from Ireland, as the Queen is not our Head of State in Ireland. I only spent a few months there, at the end of 1966.

After Perth, in the 1960s I got engaged to be married and worked at Vaucluse/Faithful Companion of Jesus (FCJ) a Catholic all girls secondary school in Richmond, Melbourne, where I worked for one year and one term in 1966. We have FCJ in Ireland also. At Vaucluse in Richmond the students were more multicultural but not affluent, mostly of Italian descent and hard-working students, who were keen to get on and be successful in life. Their parents were

Italians who came to Australia after the Second World War. The Italians felt that they were discriminated against in the 1960s and this was common knowledge as discrimination was so acceptable that most people did not even notice. The Asian community is now treated in the same way and also the Sudanese community.

In 1967 I got married and soon after I became pregnant and in 1968 our son was born. The nuns preferred you to leave school when you were pregnant, so I stayed at home. I didn't question this – it's just how it was. I would be at home with the baby anyway, and they didn't want me looking pregnant. I always knew that's how it would be. So I stayed home. In 1970 another son was born. Then my husband took up study for setting up a business. Soon after my husband lost his job in 1972 and he continued with his study.

Then I decided to return to work and look for a job in order to keep the family going and to pay the bills. After that I got a job at Preston Girls School. First they offered me a job and then they cancelled the job. A probationary job came up for my husband then. I tried again for a job with Good Samaritans in a school near the city and then in Epping, at a Good Samaritan school there, where I was teaching Year eleven. I went by train to Epping every day. It was an all girls' school, with thirty or more students in classes.

Then I got a job at a Catholic Primary school and the size of classes was huge with sixty students or one hundred and twenty students in a class. They were mostly migrants which made it very difficult for the teacher as the students had little or no English so it was a very slow process. However I managed to get through each day, but it was hard work, when the students cannot speak English. It was difficult to manage a class this big so I did a lot of group work and they did peer-learning for most of the time.

In Epping the classes were quite large and the fees were much lower. Here the parents helped with working bees. This was in the 1970s and there were lots of Dutch students. The Dutch had lots of kids helping the family so they could not do homework, as they helped their parents to look after the younger children in the family. This was how the migrants did things. To them it was more important that they look after the family than doing homework.

There were more lay people/teachers coming to more new Catholic schools as the school population increased and the nuns did not have enough religious (nuns) teachers to fill the positions in the schools. This was also the time when government funding was introduced to Catholic schools so now the religious orders could pay the lay teachers who worked in Catholic schools.

In 1974 I took up a job at FCJ Genezzano in Kew for two weeks when my daughter was a baby. Then I gave up work to stay home and became a full time mum with three kids at home. I enjoyed home life. I was not a career woman, really. After some years I started doing emergency teaching. Then I was offered a job at FCJ- Genezzano in Kew, in 1980, and I have been doing part time teaching since then.

I was not confident to teach Year twelve, only up to Year eleven because my school exams were not done here, I felt I needed to be more of an academic to teach year twelve. I taught Australian History, lots of document work, correction work, plenty of paperwork, with a range of days and times. Being part time didn't suit VCE level at the school because there were lots of meetings during the day and in the evening, which did not suit me. I was comfortable teaching at Year eleven level and I studied Australian History in my own time and I got help from my colleagues as I went.

In the 1960s there was more project work in Australian schools for assessment and it was more varied. In contrast, in Ireland there were more exam-centred assessments because the students studied for external exams; one at Year ten level, which was called Intermediate Certificate (now known as Junior Certificate) and the second one at Year twelve level called Leaving Certificate. This meant that the students in Ireland were preparing for exams throughout all of their secondary school life. Here curriculum is not written but it was in the 1960s.

Vatican II brought many changes and these changes were introduced gradually in schools and in Catholic Churches. I didn't teach Religious Education (RE) straight away. The form teacher taught RE. I did a Graduate Diploma in RE to help me teach this subject. Lay teachers studied more technology, and also there was an introduction of tape-recorders, filmstrips, overhead projectors as well as photocopiers to help with teaching, up to the 1980s. Then gradually computers were introduced through special computer rooms. All teachers had to attend computer classes so that we could use them as tools to help us in our teaching. We had to book the computer room in order to use it for our students when they were doing projects or assignments. Usually the students were faster at learning technology than us teachers. Back in the 1970s the photocopier had spirit ink. In Ireland I taught using chalk and a blackboard back in the 1960s. What a change technology brought!

There were no staff meetings in Ireland or in Australia, when I first started teaching. The Principal was a nun and she came to the staffroom to tell us what was happening for the day, very authoritarian and hierarchical. Nobody asked any questions, you just got on with the job.

In 1963 – 1964 excursions were organised over morning tea and permission was given. Parents said it was alright. There were no permission slips to be signed and handed in, so there was no paperwork to be done. Parents relied on the teachers to do the right thing. There was no need to question what they were doing. The teachers were trusted and seen as professionals who knew what was best for their students.

In Catholic schools there was a strong belief to be loyal to king and country. At Mandeville in 1965 the Duke of Gloucester, the Queen's uncle visited Melbourne and the children had to wave to him to appear loyal. This struck me as interesting, given that so many had come from Ireland. This need to look like we began in the upper sections of society meant we also had to look loyal, indeed, look British.

St Patrick's Day marches in Melbourne, organised by Archbishop Mannix had just stopped, perhaps because Mannix died in the 1960s. Before that there were great celebrations for the Irish in Melbourne, as it was a holy day and a school holiday for all Catholic school children. It seemed unfortunate to me, to lose the St Patrick Day marches, and to have to salute the Queen's uncle. This was especially so because these children 'had Irish faces, like in Ireland'.

There were some Chinese students in class too at that stage. Children of a French wool buyer came to school for a while. There was a good mixture of students in the classes and they tolerated each other for most of the time.

As regards discipline – teaching was easy because children from these schools were interested in learning. They were expected to behave properly and try their best. In the Vacluse school, in Richmond, they were very keen to learn. If not, they were told to leave school and go for a job; if they were bored, they could

leave and get a job. School was for hard work and learning – there wasn't space for children who weren't interested in that. Now some children stay on at school until they reach the legal age but really they are not interested in learning, only in socialising. However the majority want to do well and continue to VCE level and then on to university or other tertiary study which leads to their chosen career. Others get jobs after doing VCE and they are quite happy with their chosen career. There are plenty of opportunities for young people today.

Religious orders here were the same as in Ireland with 'self-selecting schools' and here they catered for the better student and also the rich or well-off student. Only those students who were successful were taken in by the nuns. They could pick and choose. It was educating the crème de la crème, clever Catholics to become Catholic leaders.

SERVICE FOR GOD ALONE - ELLEN

The nature of my interview with Ellen was very friendly from the start. She had tea and cake all set out on the table, waiting for me to arrive. She was very relaxed about the questions and because she came from a farming background like me - we seemed to have a rich understanding of each other. The interview again went over the hour and she was still telling me about her life after I turned off the tape recorder. She seemed to be happy that I was interested in her story and it meant a great deal to her. She talked about the farm today and her family members and what they were doing. I will always remember how she missed her dogs more than anything else when she moved to Australia. Here is her story.

It was a common practice at Catholic schools in Ireland, both secondary and primary, that nuns, brothers and priests who had worked overseas in the missions would visit schools when they returned for a holiday to Ireland. They seemed to be always happy and they would tell stories of their work in these foreign lands, which were always exciting for us. They made me feel excited about travel and adventure and opportunity and the differences between people and culture. They offered escape – a sort of dream. They captured my imagination so I could see everything they talked about and wanted to be part of it all. These stories instilled the spirit of adventure in all of us children and the visitors were looking for new recruits to take up ‘the call’ to go ‘on the missions’. And I wanted to be part of that community – those people who were prepared to give up everything – even life itself, if necessary - for God. They painted a picture of this work as service, but also as heroic. I wanted to be part of this alternative way of life. I realize now they were probably not on holiday, that it

was part of their job to get us while we were young, to suck us in. Such were their tactics.

At first I thought about going to South Africa, where I had cousins, but then I met Fr. Killeen. I talked to him about going 'on the missions'. I didn't really know what I wanted – I was a bit vague. He asked me what I wanted to do with my life, and where I wanted to go. 'South Africa' I said. It seemed like a safer adventure. He told me to go to New South Wales, Australia, where he had been himself. He described it as a wonderful place, where I would be needed and valued, where I could make a great contribution to the church. So I went to see the Josephites, an Australian order, at Newmarket Co Cork. In the Josephite order there was no hierarchy. Everyone took turns at cleaning and cooking so they were more equitable than other orders. Perhaps this was a reason for joining this order.

Well, I couldn't get away again! As soon as I told them I wanted to be a nun and go to the missions they grabbed me. They told me they could sort everything out in Australia. I said I wasn't ready yet, that I needed to finish school, but they said I should do that in Australia. I just went to visit and I ended up staying there for six months. So then they sent me home to the family for a while. My farewell visit. I played with my dogs and relaxed. I didn't really think about what this meant. I was too young to understand. I only thought about the adventure on the ship, meeting up with the other girls, going off as an 18 year old, becoming a nun and the adventure before me. I just worked on the farm and looked forward to what was coming. I had no idea. I didn't think about what I was leaving behind. Except for the dogs, their trust and loyalty and dependency made me feel safe around them.

There were ten of us on this adventure together in 1937. We left from Cobh in Cork, on a ship called the Jervis May. When we arrived in Sydney we were taken to the Josephite Convent at Mount Street, where we began our study for our vocations as nuns, so we were now on the missions. It was missions first, and then we became nuns and following that we became teachers. We were young and we were led by older and more experienced nuns who told us what to do and they talked us into doing things that we did not want to do but we had no say in the matter. We took the vow of obedience, which meant that we could not question the way things were done. If we did we would be seen as troublemakers. As postulants in the convent we were at the bottom of the social structure and it would seem like we had no rights because we were not allowed to question the rules but just follow them. The professed nuns were in charge so it was a power struggle trying to fit in with all the regulations. Not as equitable as I had thought...

We studied for our leaving certificate, followed by training to be a primary teacher. During all this time we did not mix with others outside the order. I didn't like that. It felt isolating. We only mixed in our own little group. This was supposed to be an adventure but the world seemed smaller not larger. It was only when we went into the schools to start teaching that we met people outside the Order.

The Australians loved us Irish. We taught the way we had been taught ourselves. The Irish had patience with the children and we didn't give up on them. We kept them trying until they understood what was taught to them, especially Maths. Many parents of the children in the schools were of Irish descent themselves so there was a cultural connection there with us Irish nuns. I taught the children to be as I was – accepting whatever you had to do, and

doing it, played a big part in getting by with everyday problems. It was the same for Maths as for everything else. Whatever values I followed I passed these onto the children and they were based on Catholic values that I grew up with. My behaviour was as a model for the children and we nuns moulded the children to our way of thinking.

We Irish stood up for the Faith – Australians of Irish descent saw us as defenders of the Faith and a defence against the British. There was no opportunity for equality for Catholics in the British system, but in Australia the Irish offered the education which provided the opportunity for upward mobility. Back then the Irish ran the Catholic Church and no one was more Irish than Dr. Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne. Dr Mannix played a very important role in the Catholic Church and Catholic schools in Melbourne. He insisted on having a school holiday on St. Patrick's Day every year and all the Catholic schools marched through the city of Melbourne and they were given prizes for their performance. The Irish culture was alive and well as Irish dancing and Irish singing were performed in the streets of Melbourne. The Irish Catholics, both clergy and lay did things the Irish way, with very little regard for the Pope. You could probably say that the Irish ran the Catholic Church.

Moving to Australia at the age of eighteen and joining an order that did not allow you to go home to Ireland when you would like to, was a very big sacrifice. Becoming a nun meant that you gave all of yourself to the service of God. Everything you did you did for God. This was really a martyr type of existence. This was the vocation of a nun and part of that vocation consisted of teaching children who needed our help, especially in preparing them for the sacraments of Confession, Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Lay teachers joined the Catholic school system when the Catholic schools were given state aid from the government in the 1970s. In the mid-1960s, Vatican II introduced many changes to the Catholic schools and church. As a result nuns were given more freedom and we took on different roles in the church community, especially running meetings at night. This brought us in touch with the outside world and most of us were happy with these changes. Some of us gradually got rid of the old nuns' habits that we were accustomed to wearing and we dressed like lay women, which meant that we were more approachable too. It seems that the younger nuns found it easier to change to wearing a dress instead of the heavy habit all year round. The older nuns, being creatures of habit (pardon the pun), did not change to wearing a dress or ordinary women's clothes. Wearing ordinary clothes gave us more freedom and we did not stand out in the crowd.

We were also now in contact with more men, not just priests. I was very happy with the changes brought about by Vatican II, as I enjoyed the company of lay teachers in the school and in this way we were in touch with the outside world. Previously we were not aware of the happenings outside the convent and we were not free to converse with members of the community, especially males, from whom we had to keep our distance.

The professional experience of my life is seen through my position as principal of a primary school. I was involved in assessments of exams. We, as nuns, prepared the boys for scholarships, which meant they could go to secondary school, creating opportunities for them to go to university and this of course would take them out of the lower social class of their parents' generation. The school inspector was a constant visitor to the school. In my case it was Mr O'Driscoll who examined the students on their spelling. Girls became mothers

and we (the nuns) prepared them for this vocation. This was very different from the boys who were seen as the breadwinners in the family. My professional experience was really limited by my vocation as a nun which restricted my contact with other teachers and for a long time, with families. I spent my day teaching subjects, such as English, Maths and Religious Education and when I became a principal I had to do administrative duties in order to run the school smoothly. My whole existence was trying to do my best in my vocation as a religious sister. My life was centred around my religious life and what I could do for God as a Josephite sister, carrying on the tradition of St. Mary of the Cross MacKillop, our founder.

My first teaching position was at St. John's school in West Footscray, where I taught for three years. The people were very good, many of Irish descent. That was in 1942 and I taught Grade 3 and 4. After that I went to Yarram for three years then to Swan Hill where the heat was unbearable with lots of dust storms. I worked there for two years. I moved around a lot, next to Sunshine, then to Altona and after that to St Monica's in Footscray. I went to West Brunswick, where I had First Holy Communion classes nearly all the time. After that I went to Camberwell. We moved around a lot and as a result we did not get to know the local community very well and we did not get attached to any particular place. We worked hard in all these communities and we did not complain in the service for God alone, that was our duty and sole commitment year after year.

My professional experience was also my personal experience, all in together. I accepted everything that was asked of me. I did not question those in charge of us. When we were told that we were not allowed to go home to visit our elderly parents and family, we did not question it. We did not request that the rules be changed to accommodate us.

It was heart breaking for me not to see my parents again. I did not visit my family for thirty-three years and when I did go home my parents had died and there was a whole new generation of nieces and nephews to meet. This was the biggest sacrifice of my life, giving up my family to come and do service for God in a foreign country,- it was worse than being in prison. You only get 25 years in prison.

MY STORY - EILEEN

My name is Eileen O'Shea and I grew up in a farming village in the west of Ireland, in County Galway. My father was a small farmer, owning thirty acres of land, which was then considered the normal size farm for that particular area in Co. Galway. Our village of Ballinamona consisted of six families, all farmers.

There were eleven people in my family; father, mother and nine children; five girls and four boys and I am the fifth (middle) child. We had a very busy childhood as we helped on the farm doing the usual farming work, depending on the season, doing the same processes year after year, as farm work depends on doing certain jobs in each season. In spring, for instance we prepared the land in order to plant the seed or the crop. Then as it grew we tended it. Then in summer we cut the hay, saved it and collected it for storage to feed the animals during the winter months. In summer we also cut the turf in the bog and placed it in the sun to dry, and it is used as fuel for the fire for the whole year. In the autumn we harvested the corn crops and the potatoes and stored them for the winter months. In late autumn we harvested the sugar beet crop, which was considered a cash crop, as it was sold to the local sugar factory in Tuam, the nearest town. The cheque for this would always arrive by post just before Christmas, which meant that we were able to buy extra things for Christmas, which was a very happy time for us children. We did not have many material things but we enjoyed what we had. The winter season was taken up with looking after the animals, which were often kept indoors and fed in their stalls, especially in the harsh winter weather. We had a routine for each season but we mostly stayed indoors during the often long winter months, except to go ice skating on the local small lakes or 'turloughs'. Life on a farm was hard work for the wife of a farmer, especially if you married into a farm. You

were expected to take care of the house and the children, when they came along, as well as help outside doing the farm work.

I started school at age five and I went to the local school, Crumlin National School, which was about three miles from my house. (Students were called scholars, when I was going to primary school.) I walked there with my brothers and sisters and my first teacher was Mrs Duffy, who always had a nap after lunch, as she read the newspaper, while we formed a circle around her, some children standing, others sitting on the floor, all reading quietly or pretending to read. While the teacher was asleep we would dare one of the students to tickle her toes to see if she would wake up, as some students sat on the floor right beside her feet. Often she would move her feet but then she fell asleep again and she never did catch anyone tickling her toes. We were afraid of her but not enough to stop us getting up to mischief.

It was a two-teacher classroom with no partition between the two sets of classes, each set had one teacher. I remember when I was in one of the lower classes with Mrs Duffy, and when I had finished my work I would listen to the other teacher, Mrs King, reciting poetry with the senior classes and I would repeat the poem to myself, until I knew it by heart. This is one of my earliest poems from primary school (Allingham in Quinn, 2008).

The Fairies by William Allingham

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men;
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather!

Down along the rocky shore
Some make their home,
They live on crispy pancakes
Of yellow tide-foam;
Some in the reeds
Of the black mountain lake,
With frogs for their watch-dogs,
All night awake.

High on the hill-top
The old King sits;
He is now so old and gray
He's nigh lost his wits.
With a bridge of white mist
Columkill he crosses,
On his stately journeys
From Slieveleague to Rosses;
Or going up with music
On cold starry nights
To sup with the Queen
Of the gay Northern Lights.

They stole little Bridget
For seven years long;
When she came down again
Her friends were all gone.
They took her lightly back,
Between the night and morrow,
They thought that she was fast asleep,
But she was dead with sorrow.
They have kept her ever since
Deep within the lake,
On a bed of flag-leaves,
Watching till she wake.

By the craggy hill-side,
Through the mosses bare,
They have planted thorn-trees
For pleasure here and there.
If any man so daring
As dig them up in spite,
He shall find their sharpest thorns
In his bed at night.
Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,

We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men;
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather.

What appealed to me so strongly about this poem? I think it was the mystery, and the organic descriptions – this was a world I knew, both legendary and real. Ireland is a harshly beautiful country, and as a child, I peopled it with imaginary creatures. But I think, too, that this poem captures something of adventure and longing – both of which have shaped me as a person.

The literature we were exposed to, presented a particular view of Ireland – our identity was defined by nature, by mystery, by rebellion and courage in the face of disadvantage and adversity. The rhythm and language of the poems we learned sang to me, and they planted in me a sense of Irishness, of belonging and of pride. When I learned these I was responding to something calling from deep within, a sense of identity that, for me, was connected to words and music.

At primary school we learned Religion, Irish, English, Maths, History, Geography, Needlework, Cooking and Singing. We learned a lot of Irish, especially conversational Irish, as our area was in 'an Irish pocket' set in the valley, so most people spoke a mixture of Irish and English. Some of our grandparents spoke Irish only, mine included. At playtime we spoke only Irish sometimes, especially when the inspector came. A lot of the students at my school were very good at Irish and not so good at English. We learned our prayers in Irish (Gaeilge), as well as History, Geography and Maths and we always sang the national anthem in Irish. I still do not know the words in English, as the Irish version is embedded in my memory. We also sang songs in Irish and plenty of Irish rebel songs.

We prepared for our First Confession, First Holy Communion and Confirmation in the lead up to the sacraments. We had to learn our catechism as we were tested orally on our knowledge of Catholicism, by the local priest who visited the school once a week. Nobody ever questioned the teachers or the priests about whether the children should receive the sacraments. It was compulsory.

Everybody was baptised straight away after they were born, and everybody received the sacraments. You did not have a choice and if a person stayed home from Mass on a Sunday, the priest would come visiting during the following week, checking up on him or her. It was just part of your faith and culture to attend Mass and the sacraments, which were all taught at the local primary school, in my case by lay teachers.

Sunday was always considered to be a day for attending Mass and a day of rest. Only the bare minimum of jobs was done on the farm, such as milking the cows and feeding the animals. No heavy work or labouring in the fields was allowed as this type of work was supposed to be done on the other six days of the week.

All Catholics followed the seasons of the Liturgical year and the season of Lent was one of the important ones, which started on Ash Wednesday, when all Catholics received ashes on their forehead in the shape of a cross. On the day before Ash Wednesday, called Shrove Tuesday, everybody was busy making pancakes. Pancakes were considered to be your last enjoyment of food before the fasting started on Ash Wednesday for the season of Lent, which was forty days. In Ireland the custom was that if a couple were planning to get married they could not marry during Lent so lots of couples got married on Shrove Tuesday. Lent was a time for fasting and abstinence from meat. Everyone gave up something for lent such as alcohol or cigarettes or sweets (lollies). In our house I remember the children (myself included) giving up sweets and sugar in

our tea. After a couple of seasons of giving up sugar I eventually could not drink tea with sugar anymore. We would save any money we were given for sweets and collect it for 'the black babies' in Africa, which was organised by the primary school and the money was sent off to some Catholic mission to help the poor people there. We would attend church during Holy Week, the week before Easter.

In our area we also had what was called 'The Stations', which was a Mass said in one of the houses in the village every six months, one in spring and one in autumn. Perhaps it originated from the 'hedge masses', when the Irish priests were not allowed to say Mass in a church and if they did they were put to death, under the Penal Laws (Brown, 2004). The 'Stations' Mass was usually said by the local parish priest and he would bring two altar boys with him (girls were not allowed) to serve Mass. This was a special occasion so the house had to be painted and the best china dishes were cleaned for the breakfast for the priest after Mass. The priest was given the best food, such as grapefruit to start with, followed with bacon and eggs and plenty of tea, as well as bread, butter and marmalade. This was the only time that I saw grapefruit in the house. Another luxury my mother bought for these occasions was a bag of sugar-lumps instead of the ordinary grains of sugar. Certain people were picked from the neighbours to sit with the priest and they were usually women as they were considered to have better manners than the men and they did not swear. Most of the people, both men and women, were scared of the priest. After breakfast and when the priest had left, everybody would join in and have a party. That night the people of the house would have a dance and a drinking session and all the neighbours were invited and as they were all farmers they were in no hurry to return home with work always present in the morning. This was the villagers' method of

socializing and having a good time and it broke the monotony of doing the routine farm work every day. Everyone was involved in every activity as this was all part of their identity. If a neighbour needed help, as in the case of our neighbour, a widow, who lived alone, all the other neighbours would get together and do the farm work for her. It was just part of the Irish psyche, especially in rural Ireland, where everybody helped everybody in time of need. This was often the case in our village. Faith and ritual were determining cultural experiences; it was in them that we found our sense of identity.

As a rural Catholic family in Ireland, faith was a way of life. It was inside everything we did. We worked hard on the farm, but we always kept Sundays as restful as we could; we went to Mass; we prayed the Angelus; we were motivated by working according to God's plan. Faith, and acknowledging faith, was simply a way of being, as natural to us as breathing.

At school, both primary and secondary, some nuns, brothers and priests would come visiting to tell the students about the wonderful time they could have if they joined their order of nuns or brothers and all the places they could visit. To young minds the stories and places were enticing and we all wanted to join up there and then, but we had to wait until we got older or so they told us. I was always interested in hearing about their travelling as I was curious about how other people lived and what they looked like.

One event that happened at our school every winter was the gathering for the fox hunting day. A big crowd of locals, horses and riders would meet outside the school gate. Most of the riders were of British descent and they spoke with a posh accent and they were rich, all dressed out in their riding gear. Many of them came from the local town, Tuam and they were Protestants. Before they went hunting the fox, they had a drink of brandy to warm up as it was usually a

frosty day. The students and the locals were merely spectators. We, the very poor, watched the antics of the rich, and we were slightly scared of them. We were not scared of the horses - we had a horse, for working on the farm - but of the strange, rich people who probably looked down on us. Some of the local farmers would help the riders mount their horses and if they were lucky they might get a drop of brandy for their efforts. They had lots of beagle dogs for hunting the fox and they would arrive in trailers or wagons and then they would set out when they got the scent of the fox and follow the head hunter at the front, who would blow the bugle when the hunt was about to get underway. The dogs would then search through the scrub for the fox and hunt him out and then the race would start across the fields in the countryside after the fox, with all the riders following behind, racing and jumping over fences and walls. You could see the riders from a distance in their red jackets. Often the fences and walls were wrecked by the riders and the poor farmers had to go round and fix everything up because the cattle and sheep would escape from the fields. Some of the poor farmers were not happy about this but they were too scared to complain. When the fox was caught by the dogs they tore him to pieces in a very cruel way. Then all the riders and their horses would return to the school area to pack up and go home after their outing.

When students reached Grade four at about ten years of age, it was time to prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation. This was held every three or four years, so you had a group of students from Grades four, five and six all making their Confirmation at the same time. This was a big event as you got to meet the Bishop or, in our case, the Archbishop of Tuam. One of the priests attending the Confirmation would come around as you sat in the pew in church, and ask you a question from the catechism. It was very important that you knew the answer.

As they had for their first communion, the girls would dress in white dresses and wear white veils on their heads and the boys wore suits. Then after the big event in church we went home and took some photos and we had a special meal to celebrate our big day.

After I had finished primary school, I attended an all girls' secondary school at the Presentation College in Athenry and I cycled to the local train station at 7am to catch the train every morning, including Saturday, for a half day. I got to school one hour early and then I went to Mass at the local church there. I got the train back in the evening and I cycled home in the dark, cold and wet. Later as the number of students grew, I changed to catching the bus and I walked with my sister to the bus stop, a distance of about two miles, at 7 am. As was my practice, I went to Mass every morning before school and I got home on the bus at 7pm. It was a twelve hour day. It was very dark in winter walking home. We also went to school on Saturdays for a half day. In my first year there, all my teachers were nuns except for my French teacher who was a female lay teacher. Gradually more lay teachers joined the school which was run by the Presentation nuns, so that in my last year, there were three lay teachers there, all women. The lay teachers wore their graduation gowns all day, while they were at school.

Following secondary school I went on to study at Galway University, in Galway city where I did a BA degree in English, Geography, Sociology and Politics. Then I studied for the Higher Diploma in Education, which allowed me to teach in secondary and vocational schools. I got a teaching position at a vocational school in County Kilkenny teaching English and Geography, where I stayed for one year. I then moved to a vocational school in County Kildare, where I taught the same subjects and I was co-ordinator of the Geography Department. In

order to teach in a vocational school I had to pass a written exam in Irish (Gaeilge). This was compulsory for all teachers in the vocational school as well as all primary teachers. Again after one year in County Kildare I decided that I wanted to teach overseas and I thought initially of going to Canada. However, I changed my mind as I thought it was similar to the United States and I had spent three summers there working, while I was at university. Just as I thought of going to Australia, an advertisement appeared in the Sunday newspaper, looking for teachers in Catholic schools in Australia, so I applied. My sister, who had just finished her training decided to come with me so we were asked to attend an interview in Dublin city with Brother Landers from the Catholic Education Office in Brisbane. The interview went well and we got a visa and a free one way ticket to Brisbane. Our contract was for one year only. We stopped at Sydney and were met by guides who gathered our group together, about fifteen of us, and we were put on a plane for Brisbane, where we were met by people from the Catholic Education Office. It was in January 1975. We were given the 'royal treatment' with a chauffeur-driven car and free accommodation and three meals a day, all served up to us, for at least a week. Each day we attended seminars giving us advice about living in Australia and what to do with our money. There were representatives from different banks and companies. I remember one man saying to travel around and to live in different cities.

After one year teaching in a Catholic primary school, in Enoggera, run by the Good Samaritan Sisters, in Brisbane, my sister and I decided to go and teach at St. John's College in Roma, a secondary co-educational school run by the Mercy Order of nuns. I got involved with the debating team there and we won the junior school section in our first year. During these two years teaching in Catholic schools in Australia, my professional experience consisted of attending

seminars and professional development sessions on the Religious Education curriculum as well as updates on the sacraments and how to prepare the students for these in the primary school. My sister and I taught next door to each other, she taught a Grade four class of boys and girls and I taught a Grade five class of all girls, thirty-five of them. Many of the students came from the local army families and they were very well-behaved. It was a very multicultural school with a mixture of Italian, Dutch and Anglo-Celtic students; not a rich school. In fact I would say that this was my best year of teaching in my entire career. The class could be moulded at this age and if there was a problem we worked on it together to sort out the issues. Once we, as a class, set up a routine for each day, everything went smoothly. We did the usual spelling tests and times tables tests every day at the same time and there was a lot of competition between the students to get everything correct. In order to keep the students motivated I introduced 'story-reading' time for fifteen minutes at the end of each day, provided we got all our work done for the day. The students looked forward to this at the end of each day as they were keen to finish the story. It also inspired them to take up reading themselves. There was never any interference from parents. They trusted the teachers to teach their children and we, as teachers, were treated with respect. The only time I spoke to parents was at the end of the year when they found out that I was leaving and they asked me to stay to teach Grade six the following year. At the Christmas concert the students from Grade five sang the song 'Twelve Days of Christmas'. There were two nuns in the school, the principal and a Grade four teacher, who loved to sing and play guitar; all the other teachers were lay women.

At St. John's College in Roma, teaching was a lot different to primary teaching. Here, in this rural setting, the students were very relaxed and with very little

motivation to learn. The classes were small, about twenty at the most, of Anglo-Celtic background. Being a small country town they all knew each other and many of them were cousins. We attended the local football games held every Sunday in the town and the local dances every Saturday night. The people were very friendly and very hospitable. It was a very ecumenical place and this could be seen when a local man was ordained to the priesthood and all religious groups took part in the celebrations at the local Catholic Church and the local hall afterwards for a party. It was a Grade eight to ten school and many of the students left school at Grade ten to get jobs locally. A few students went on to boarding school at Toowoomba. The principal was a nun and the vice-principal was a man. There was one other nun and about three lay teachers so it was a very small school. My professional experience consisted of attending professional development sessions in Religious Education and English curriculum. I also attended a two day seminar on geography and mining in Brisbane and the group was taken on a tour of the Blackwater Mine in Queensland, which was very interesting.

After two years in Australia, we decided to go back home to Ireland for a holiday so we went at Christmas in 1976 and we took an Australian friend with us from Roma. She loved Ireland and the Irish people but she had a problem with the short day, getting dark at four o'clock in the evening in the wintertime. We had a great time as we caught up with family and friends there. On our return to Roma we had no accommodation, so the Mercy nuns gave us a room each at the convent. Eventually we found a house, which we shared with the local magistrate's daughter, who worked in the bank. Then, after first term, we decided to go to Melbourne, via a twenty-one day camping tour around Australia. We had a great time as we learned how to erect a tent and we saw

lots of interesting parts of Australia including Uluru and Alice Springs. We finished the tour in Brisbane and then we drove to Melbourne after we organised for all our belongings to be sent home to Ireland. At this stage we had planned to visit Melbourne and then go on to Perth before we went back to Ireland for good. However, everything changed when we got to Melbourne. Within three weeks of arriving in Melbourne we met two Irish men who were to become our husbands the following year. That was the end of our plans to visit Perth. In Melbourne it was difficult to get teaching jobs as we arrived in the middle of the school year. However, I got work as an emergency teacher at a few different schools, one a Christian school and the rest were Catholic schools. It was very interesting to work at different schools and I had very positive experiences at each school, despite their differences. The Catholic schools that I worked at were all-girls' schools and the Christian school was a co-educational school with boarders. The class sizes varied considerably with much smaller classes in the Christian school and they also had more updated equipment and more resources. All students treated me with the same respect and there was no problem with discipline. I still remember the morning that Elvis Presley died and I walked into class as an emergency teacher and many of the students were crying. At first I thought it was some well-loved relative/grandmother who had died, but I thought: 'they cannot all be related'. Then I asked them and they told me it was Elvis Presley, who had died. They were so heartbroken that we did not get much work done that day. The students in the Catholic schools were multicultural compared to mostly of English descent in the Christian school. The staff in all schools was very helpful and friendly towards me.

In the last term I got a permanent job teaching in an all girls' Catholic school, following a brief period as an emergency teacher and I was married the

following year. After a couple of years there I moved to another all-girls' Catholic school. During my time at both schools I attended lots of professional development sessions on the Religious Education, English, History and Geography curriculum. I also attended a two day live-in seminar on training to be a principal, organised by the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne, which was very interesting.

When my eldest daughter was born, I took time off for maternity leave and when she was about fifteen months I returned to work one day a week. My daughter was not happy to be looked after by a stranger so I worked one term and then resigned from teaching as I became pregnant with my second daughter. I settled down to being a full time mother, which I enjoyed very much. When my eldest daughter was three years old and my second was fifteen months the three of us set off for Ireland to visit my parents.

After five months my husband joined us for the Christmas holidays, we all returned to Australia together in February. My father died the following July so I was glad we went to visit when we did. We settled back to a routine of going to kindergarten and playgroup; the following year my son was born and I was even busier than before. When my son was about three years old I started doing some emergency teaching at the local Catholic primary school, which my daughters attended. Later I got emergency work at the local Catholic secondary college, again attended by my daughters, so I took them to school, stayed for the day and then took them back home in the afternoon, which was very convenient.

When my son started school I applied for a teaching job at the local Community Centre teaching literacy, numeracy and computers to adults on two days a week. Soon my hours were increased and I taught English as a Second

Language there as well as literacy, numeracy and computers. I soon progressed to teaching four days a week and I worked there for eleven years. I taught adult students, a mixture of men and women, to read and write and to do mathematics, as well as basic computer skills. The curriculum we followed was for the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA), Certificates I to IV using general English skills. We did a lot of practical work such as, reading a recipe, following the steps involved, measuring the ingredients and cooking the product. Each student took turns at this and it was a way of building up their confidence too. The classes were small about eight to ten students, which helped immensely. We were paid by the Victorian Government under Adult Education. For the ESL students they were taught using the ESL Frameworks program, where the students started at Level I and finished at Level IV, using reading, writing, speaking and listening formats. We had a multicultural group of students from Asia, Europe, South America and Africa. It was quite an interesting mixture and they just loved learning grammar, which as it happened I loved to teach. At the end of each term we had a party where both groups brought food to share and at the end of each year we had a big Christmas party for all staff and groups at the centre.

I did lots of professional development sessions during my time there. I began by attending a beginners' course in computers, once a week for two hours for one term. Then with practice I became more confident in using computers and I taught myself new skills with some help from the computer teachers at the centre. While teaching there, I attended numerous moderation sessions for CGEA and ESL Frameworks, usually one a term for each program, to discuss our students' progress and to learn about any updates to the programs. We also attended a full day conference each year on Adult Education, where we listened

to keynote speakers as well as receiving updates on Computer Education. It was all very inspiring and interesting.

The professional experience of working in this environment was only one factor in my staying there for eleven years. It was close to home, and if the children were ill I could stay home with them. It was a family friendly environment in that way and so my professional and family lives could be enmeshed rather than separate. During that time I also did some day and evening adult teaching, again ESL and literacy, at Victoria University in Werribee. I also returned to university to do part time study in Teaching English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL) firstly to complete a Graduate Certificate and then a Masters in TESOL. Teaching migrants English gave me a new interest and inspired me to do further study in order to understand where my ESL students were coming from. As part of my TESOL course I studied Japanese for six months and then wrote a reflection on how I felt after each class and my experience of learning a new language with a different script to mine. It was very interesting. I also studied Spanish and Italian for a short time as I had students from Chile and Italy in my ESL classes. This was all very helpful for my teaching.

After eleven years of adult teaching I returned to secondary teaching in a local Catholic school, where I am currently teaching Religious Education, ESL and English. My story, while unique to me, also contains universal experiences. It is a story of journey, of growth and of change. It speaks of the migrant experience, and also of the ways in which our childhood experiences shape us into the people we become. Like each of my participants, being Catholic is a significant part of my identity – it influences the ways I think about people and experiences, and has shaped the rhythm of my life. Growing up in rural Ireland created in me

a sense of time, space and wonder, and each of these has their role in the development of my story. It was when I reflected on the stories of my participants that I saw how closely our lives reflected one another, but also, how differently we had taken some experiences and been shaped by them, and used them to shape the contexts in which we work.

As stated earlier my personal experiences/story in many ways reflected those experienced by the twenty-two participants, for example – growing up in rural Ireland, teaching in Australia, Catholic upbringing and values. Listening to and retelling the participants' stories, raised a multitude of personal emotions and reflections that prompted me to include my own story within this research.

Including my own story has been emotionally draining, but never the less has been cathartic in terms of understanding that many of my own experiences are common to this group of Irish women educators.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

The twenty-two women interviewed for my research were great believers in the power of education. They shared a view of knowledge as opportunity, whether it meant a better chance at gaining employment in the local community or doing extra study in order to prepare for secondary or tertiary education. The transcribed interview data was analysed in order to identify themes, patterns and / or constructs emanating from the participants' stories. This was an iterative process that involved repeated reading, interpretation and analysis of the raw data. The identification of themes from the data highlighted commonalities that arose and in some cases were repeated in the multiple interviews (Patton, 1990). These themes were related to gender, place, identity and authority, curriculum and the classroom and Vatican II (Refer to Table 2). Together, they form the professional experience of these women as a group, though individual experiences varied within these broader circumstances. Each of these will be explored in this chapter.

Table 2 Themes and sub themes

Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Woman• Life journeys• Relationships• Employment• Marriage• Teaching subjects• Studying subjects
Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convent• Ireland• Australia• Victoria• Country• Suburbs• School
Identity and authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Woman• Irish• Catholic• Nun - religious• Clothing• Teacher• Lay person• Mother• Principal
Curriculum and the Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curriculum• Religious• Student numbers• Rich students• Poor students• Resources• Year levels
Vatican II	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being Catholic• Being female• Being a teacher• Changes from Vatican II

GENDER

There are significant gender issues in each of the participants' stories. These are very clear in the story from Hannah, The Adventurer. The ways in which women were defined and limited by men in the context of education are apparent in the connection between subjects taught and gender – where some subjects are seen or have been seen to be suitable for women to study and some are not (Spender & Sarah, 1988). In this case the subject was geography, where it was considered to be for males only to study. Hannah states that;

‘Geography graduates were limited to men only’. Females were allowed to study it but only at undergraduate level not post graduate level. This is significant because there is a direct comparison with Margaret’s story where she, a Josephite nun, taught herself woodwork in order to teach the boys – but not the girls. Margaret states that ‘there was craftwork for boys ...woodwork ... made doll’s house ... older boys made a crib’. The ways in which a dominant power, whether that was a university board or a nun in a classroom, used gender to control access to information and skills provides an insight into the ways women (and men) could be defined and limited not on the grounds of ability, but on the grounds of gender (Spender & Sarah, 1988). The ways in which women worked within this context – at times supporting, and at other times undermining it, provides further insight into the professional experiences of women and the fine line they walked between endorsing community values and using education to liberate themselves. It is an interesting comment on specific gender roles that Margaret learned woodwork in order to teach boys, but that she was herself a woman. On the farms in Ireland, plenty of women would have cut wood and used their hands in making things. The power that comes with woodwork and the supposed masculinity of that activity exists in a particular world view that was endorsed by educators (girls’ subjects and boys’ subjects) but which was undermined by the ways in which people actually lived (Blake, 1973). Girls were considered to be homemakers; that is get married and produce a family of children, to be looked after by the mother, while the father was the breadwinner in the family (Blake, 1973; Spender & Sarah, 1988). The fact that being a homemaker may have included fixing and making things for use in the home was overlooked by those people who designed curriculum.

Margaret, while a woman, was also a nun. It seems that nuns could at times break gender roles. Nuns taught science, although few girls studied it; Margaret taught herself woodwork in order to teach the boys; nuns built and fixed things within their communities that would have been built and fixed by a man in broader society. Given that they were not married but had chosen to live in community, this provides an insight into perceptions of women. Does accepting a celibate lifestyle in some way 'de-feminise' a woman? (Cline, 1994).

Hannah was not a nun and was acutely aware of some of the ways in which gender determined her choices. However, it is only on reflection, after many years that some other aspects of her experiences are understood in gender terms. Hannah notes that 'In teaching, equal pay came later for women, even though we did the same work. It wasn't very fair'. Women had the same training for teaching at university or teacher training colleges and they carried out the same work, yet their pay was much lower for the same effort (Blake, 1973).

There were no maternity leave payments nor leave without pay for women. In the Catholic school system, there was a prevailing attitude, by principals, nuns, and society in general, that expected women to leave work when they looked pregnant (Theobald & Selleck, 1990). Again, Hannah mentions this: as a laywoman, 'nuns preferred you to leave school when you were pregnant, so I stayed at home. I didn't question this – it's just how it was. I would be at home with the baby anyway, and they didn't want me looking pregnant. I always knew that's how it would be. So I stayed home'. She accepted the social norm that was imposed by the world she was working in – a micro-world that was dominated by nuns and a macro-world that was dominated by men. This is a reflection of the uncomfortable dichotomous person of the Virgin. Young Catholic girls were taught to aspire to virginity and so encouraged to become

nuns. But if you could not be a nun, then you should be a mother. The problem the church has always had with motherhood is that it involves sex (Leskošek, 2011). Nothing more than pregnancy tells the world that the woman has engaged in sex. Therefore the physical nature of a pregnant woman is problematic in a school environment where there is ambivalence about the nature of femininity and competing ideal roles of womanhood. The nuns stood outside this system of understanding, as women who would never be pregnant.

However, the nuns were still subject to gender determination. Mary complained about Christian Brothers having time off for study but not the nuns: 'We didn't understand that – how it was different for them. Was their study more important? Was teaching in their schools more important?' Mary notes the frustration of struggling to achieve while being treated differently. This is at the core of the professional experiences of many of these women – their aspiration to be the best teachers they could, and yet the lack of recognition for their work because they were women. Moreover, it was impossible for their struggle to be recognized. It is the invisibility of the struggle to those who should have seen it that highlights above all else the nature of gender determination and the ways in which power and hierarchy functioned in these women's worlds.

The nuns taught boys and girls together in the convent schools usually up to Grade four or five and then the boys moved on to all-boys schools run by the Christian Brothers (MacDonagh & Mandle, 1986), De La Salle Brothers or Marist Brothers. Scholarships were awarded to boys, whose families could not afford to pay for their secondary school education but who did well in examinations. If their results were excellent the Brothers' school would provide them with free education and board if it was a boarding school. The Brothers were very keen to get the most talented and enthusiastic boys so they could

mould them and give them a good education in order for them (the boys) to go on to university and choose careers in the professions such as medicine, law, politics, finance, banking and teaching. Many of them were children of poor Irish families and this was an opportunity for the children to do better than their parents and move up the social ladder. This is a credit to the nuns, who were their very first educators at school. However, it is notable again, that the nuns supported this structure which gave educational opportunities to boys but not to girls.

Margaret is explicit in stating that she became a nun because she did not wish to marry, and was tired of the social pressure to marry. 'I was happy as I was, single and free,' says Margaret. Here there is a reference to gender and marriage and this comes up in some form in every story. Margaret seems to have joined the religious life rather than to be married at that time in her life in order to keep her respectability. Another nun had two marriage proposals on the ship to Australia, which she refused. The choice to marry seems to be more the 'norm'. The lay women who told their stories married and settled in Australia (even if they married Irishmen). For them the dilemmas created by gender within their professional experiences had to do with appropriate behaviours once pregnant or with small children. For Margaret, however, the choice to be a nun was a choice not to marry (Magray, 1998). The option of remaining single was not one she was able to countenance. This thesis has not considered the women's sexual preferences. However, it was apparent from the participants' stories that Catholic Ireland was not a place where a sexual relationship with a woman was possible to reconcile with social realities.

Margaret refers to the group of females as 'girls'. This statement shows that the group were young and maybe immature, still waiting to be formed or shaped.

The general idea was to recruit the girls while they are young so that the older nuns can mould them into 'good' nuns for their order in Australia. Some of these 'girls' were only fifteen or sixteen years old at the time they met at Newmarket in County Cork, to sign up for 'the missions' in Australia. This would be their first trip outside Ireland for them and more than likely they did not expect to return home.

PLACE

The nuns were always being moved from convent to convent (Casey, 1993; McGuinness, 2013), almost like itinerants on a long journey, going places, and a new place every year. But the lay woman, also, shared the journey narrative. Their journey was often more metaphorical, including marriage, childbirth and parenting. The ways they viewed this, though, as part of a wider journey of life, and as a consequence of that first journey from Ireland to Australia, means that they, too saw themselves as itinerants going somewhere, but not always knowing where.

The idea of place occurs again and again also, so it plays an important part in the lives of my participants. Moving around a lot meant that the nuns did not get much time to develop long-term relationships with students and this was a pattern for all the nuns. This was particularly challenging for a teacher, in such a relational job. Mary was happy in her second year at Mentone - and her teaching was satisfying that year. Perhaps it was because she knew the children and their families. This is not identified by Mary as the reason, but as someone listening to her story, who has shared experiences as a teacher, I wonder if this was the case. Another participant, a nun, who spent more than one year teaching at a Catholic secondary college in the country, had very successful results in the VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education). Again she did

not state being there for more than one year as the reason. She remarked that she did not want the students 'to be disadvantaged' because they lived in the country. The idea that teaching is relational (Conle, 2006) is at odds with the practice of the religious orders that moved teaching nuns around at will, usually every twelve months, and often with the specific purpose of stopping relationships forming. The Gospel quote (Luke 14:26) – that anyone who values their relationships with family over their relationship with God is unknown to God – was used to break down relationships and deny human contact.

Every year, most of these nuns, especially those who taught in primary schools, began their teaching in a new school. These new surroundings with new families may have kept them motivated and keen to teach all the new children in their classes as well as getting to know the parish priest and parish community as well as the local community in the new town. On the other hand constant moving and not staying longer than a year or two in each school meant that the nuns did not get an opportunity to build relationships with the school and parish community.

It is noteworthy that the pledge to obedience meant these moves were not questioned – and were still not questioned when the participants told their stories. One of the participants remarked that this was how things were done and you followed the rules as a nun. This was an accepted part of the professional experience, even though research now tells us that building relationships with students (Conle, 2006) and understanding the communities in which they live is a critical factor in their learning. The reduction in personal satisfaction that came from moving, and that is implied in many stories, is also not questioned.

Some schools were established by the nuns. In some cases, two or three nuns would go out to a small community as true pioneers and get the community involved in setting up a school for the local Catholic children. This was all part of the missionary work that Margaret and others like her, came to Australia to do. There was a job to be done and they went and did it on their own. Places were also important to Hannah. As a laywoman, she was free to come and go as she thought fit. She liked to travel around the world and eventually around Australia doing different types of jobs in various places.

In Margaret's story the ship she travelled on from Ireland was on its last trip to Australia, never to sail again, just like Margaret leaving Ireland, her place of birth for good. There is a sense of foreboding that the ship will never sail back again. Back then it was common for emigrants to leave Ireland for good and they would never see their families again. Perhaps she was thinking of her own journey that she may not go back to Ireland again, just like the ship.

In the same way Margaret worked in a small shop in a small place, before she joined the religious order. The small shop can be seen to reflect her small world. She presents herself as surrounded by narrow-minded people in a quiet community with not much happening around her. Margaret sought to escape from small ideas in this small world with no excitement. She may have been annoyed by these same people asking her about getting married as if that was the only vocation in life for her. We may ask the questions: 'Why did she need to get married and why were people married by a certain age? Was there a problem/feeling that if she was not married by a certain age she lost some of her status in society in general?' She was tormented by people asking her about when she was getting married. Why did the question torment her? Perhaps she had no notion of getting married (Magray, 1998) because getting

married did not help anyone and she may have concerns about this. In the 1930s marriage and becoming a nun were the only two options that were considered by women because 'spinsterhood' was not attractive (McKenna, 2006) and it was frowned upon by society in general. Women were engaged in certain employment such as teaching and nursing, as these were considered respectable, but only on a temporary basis before marriage or the religious life. After the women were married they gave up work and they settled down to rearing a family as this was considered the most important institution other than religious life. Those women who joined the religious life had various reasons for joining up, mostly 'to go on the missions' and for various opportunities such as adventure and travel to foreign countries (McKenna, 2006). All of the nuns in this study were fortunate to receive an education and training to become teachers as most of them joined up as teenagers. This was all part of their professional experience right from the start. They may have seen this life as preferable to marrying into a farm and doing farm work as they had seen their mothers do.

At that time the parents decided on the partner for the daughter not herself, as matchmakers were very common in Ireland in the 1930s. Margaret clearly felt trapped in this small shop and small community where everybody knew everybody's business! Her options were limited. She may well have asked: 'What can I do to get out of this situation to get out of this place?' For Margaret, 'place' was not just the small known community and the wonder of a life beyond that. In addition and in relation to psychological and emotional place – it was a place where she did not have to answer to those in her community. Ironically she chose an alternative community to which to answer – a different sense of place, but a place nonetheless.

Mary's first impressions were that Australia was a very advanced mission country. She states: 'I was amazed that everything was so advanced and extremely modern and affluent. I thought it would be like Africa, very poor'. I believe her idea of a mission was to help very poor people, perhaps aborigines, as other nuns were doing in Africa. She must have got quite a shock when she arrived and saw how affluent Australians were. She noted that the houses had lovely gardens. Furthermore, the houses were all different, not rows of houses all the same with just little touches of individuality. For Mary there was an immediate disjuncture between her expectations of her vocation and the reality of the place she found.

Margaret describes how the nuns/teachers and the students practised air raid drills moving in and out of the basement shelters during the war in case any bomb was dropped on them. The war seemed to be just another challenge which she took in her stride and carried on regardless of what was going on around her. The tyranny of distance may have protected Margaret from the realities of war. Being a long way from Ireland, and an Irish girl, she may have known very little of the war that was going on in Europe, which did not involve Ireland. The war in the Pacific Ocean and the attacks on Darwin, Broome and Sydney must have entered her consciousness. However, these were not things that Margaret talked about.

After the war in Europe there was an influx of migrants to Australia, especially to Victoria and later more migrants came from the Eastern Bloc countries. The Catholic schools were overflowing with migrant students. Margaret believed this was because the state schools refused to take them. However, there is no evidence of this; in fact, the rights of these children to a state education were enshrined in law (Blake, 1973). Mary notes that the parish priest would not turn

away children, and comments that he did not have to manage the influx or teach the children. It appears that Catholic schools would not refuse these students an education with a religious focus.

The nuns took turns at going back to Ireland. Mary went after fourteen years; Ellen had her first trip in thirty-three years and Margaret after thirty-seven years. When their turn came this was often an unsettling experience as the nuns realised how much they had missed out on, with regard to family celebrations and events.

After Mary's trip to Ireland her life was 'terrible'. She had come here as a seventeen year old and she was given the responsibility of looking after a classroom of children within a few years. At first she followed all the rules and she was the top postulant in the group. However, after some time, she identified herself as having a 'problem' with authority, because she asked too many questions and she was 'demoted'. She missed so many things about Ireland; the people - brothers and sisters living lives she was not part of. She had missed the growth of her family – she became aware of children she would never meet. She missed the Irish countryside and the way of life there, and rediscovered the freedom of making her own decisions. These relate to her personal experiences. She felt a deep loneliness after she returned and because of that she could not settle into the life she had before her trip to Ireland. Other nuns who went to Ireland for their first trip home did not have that desperation to return to Ireland. They just accepted things as they were and carried on as before. But not Mary. She decided to leave the order after a few years of consideration and return to Ireland. However, after a short time in Ireland she was not happy there and she went to live in England. Then she became restless and returned to Australia once again back to the nuns she had

left, but not as a nun. The notion of place is critical in understanding Mary's story. The absence of a place with which she could identify affected her professional experience by unsettling her sense of self and the world.

Why did Mary return to Australia? There are many reasons why Mary may have returned. She did not articulate them, either because they were so embedded in her way of thinking, or perhaps because she had never articulated them to herself. As the researcher, I find myself asking whether this is again to do with identity and place: Had Mary lost her sense of self and travelled to find it? Had her identity been altered by returning to an Ireland where life had continued without her? At that time there was a shortage of teachers in the Catholic system in Victoria so there was a need for teachers. Mary decided to return to Australia because life in Ireland was not working for her either. Was it because her only role / identity was as a nun (which she was no longer) or as a teacher? Does this return to the question of identity, to the clothing and power and the ways these things shaped her as a very young woman, as a seventeen year old? She spent the best part of her life in a convent with like-minded women and now she is on her own. How strong she had to be to reframe her life and her thinking, and to be herself. Experience at Mary's job rather than professional learning or training informed her competency. It sounds like she was never really settled, just one thing led to another without any direction or plan in her life. Perhaps she was struggling with her identity and she could not work out where she belonged. She could not settle in Ireland, even though she wanted to spend time with her family. She seemed very restless and lost for a while. She had trouble settling in one place. The frameworks had disappeared and she became at a loss as to where to go, how and what to do now without her congregation. She was not used to all this freedom and surviving on her own.

The lay women whom I interviewed were also free to travel where there was work for teachers and because some of them did not have any dependents they could move around quite freely in Australia to different schools. However their experience of this was quite different to that of Mary. The freedom to make some choices was part of their everyday lives. Making choices did not present a dilemma as much as freedom.

The stories of these women intersect with the stories of another group of displaced people: migrants to Australia. Each of my participants commented on the difficulties of catering for migrant children. In Victoria it was difficult to teach the migrants because classes were already large, limited resources were provided, and the children came into the classroom with no English. The teachers taught the English speaking students grammar first, and then those children would teach the migrants after they understood it themselves. Hannah mentions problems of culture and discrimination, especially towards the Italians. The migrant families were very big families with lots of children and often the older siblings looked after the younger siblings while the parents were at work or helped out in the family. These migrant children had a problem doing their homework because they had no time to do it and it was not seen as important. The family came first and there was nothing the teacher could do about this. This was a very different attitude to schooling to that of the Catholic families seeking to climb the social and professional ladder prior to World War II. It is interesting that several of the participants continued to teach English to migrants, after retirement from teaching full time. Perhaps this was a reflection of both their professional experiences as teachers, and their personal experiences as outsiders entering a new world. They bring to this work a particular understanding of place and identity.

Hannah's professional experiences included teaching alongside nuns, whose life experience and teaching background were different to her own. As a laywoman, she taught classes next door to the nuns. She stated that she did not question their teaching methods, and noted that some nuns may not have done as much training as she had. We know from Hannah's story, and from the stories of others, that if the school was short on teachers they would get one of the nuns who was in training and she would learn on the job. Hannah claims never to have questioned whether the nuns who worked alongside her were trained or not. She just got on with her own teaching. However, the fact that she commented on this in her interview, suggests that she had some thoughts about the qualifications and teaching styles of her colleagues, though never discussed publicly. Hannah became a teacher because of a calling to teaching, whereas many of the women she worked alongside became teachers because that was what the Order required of them. These are markedly different experiences in becoming teachers. Similarly, the nuns' primary focus in teaching was to teach the sacraments; the secondary focus was to advance the Catholic community. Hannah's focus, however, was to educate, to expand students' minds and expose them to ways of understanding the world via subject matter. Mary provided an interesting foil to this generalisation. As a nun, she sought to teach according to the Order's requirements. Returning to teaching in a Catholic school as a layperson, however, she wanted to teach different values, such as being independent learners and standing up for themselves.

IDENTITY AND AUTHORITY

Moving place resulted in new found identities for each of the participants in this study (Casey, 1993). In some cases these identities were imposed; in others, they were adopted by choice. The use of clothing in creating identity was a significant feature in several of the stories of religious sisters (Casey, 1993; Kuhns, 2003; McGuinness, 2013). The nuns' habits were made from heavy woollen material which was suitable for the Irish climate but unbearable in the heat and stickiness of the Australian summer weather. The headdress they wore was uncomfortable and created enormous challenges and discomfort for them especially in the humid conditions. This was a visual and physical representation of the colonial experience. Not only were these young women 'going on the missions', they were taking with them the trappings of civilization, transferring the clothing and the status symbolized by that clothing, from one culture to another. These habits/clothes are connected with the identity of these nuns and their sense of self (Casey, 1993). The habit identifies them as belonging to a certain order of nuns and a particular religion in a new country. Their clothes are a symbol of something more significant, not just any clothes, because they represent a certain group in society that is not the same as everyone else. They are set apart from the rest of society and live in a special building with other women who wear the same clothes and follow the same rules, which make them behave in a certain way. The clothes alone resulted in certain behaviours. It is hard to run in a habit, hard to turn one's head, hard to change direction quickly. The habit controlled and contained the women's movements and imposed a 'holy calm' on them by virtue of the fact that they could not move quickly.

The habit also tied the nuns to a way of life, to their Irish heritage and to some extent, to Ireland. Imposition of the habit contributed to the institutionalisation of these women: wearing the same habit, following a strict routine over many years and having meals and prayers at a certain time with like-minded sisters dressed in the same habit. The habit identified their stage on the journey of religious life. Mary explicitly comments that she wore a black veil at the beginning, and that the habit would change as she reached full profession and moved toward the full habit.

Consequently, as many of them note, it was difficult for them to make changes in their convent life. Their habits were very important to them. They were the form and the symbol of their lifestyle. Mary was very aware of the use of clothes to control. When she joined the sisters, they took her clothes and gave her the novice's habit. Her comment as regards clothes was: 'I lost something when they took my clothes'. Now, as a laywoman, she is in civil clothes. When she returned to Ireland, and then to family in England, her sister-in-law took her shopping for a whole new wardrobe. This was a necessity – she had no clothes other than the one outfit she left the religious life wearing. But she was also symbolically shopping for a new lifestyle: clothing that reflected likes, a sense of personhood, and needs in terms of climate, personal space and individuality.

All of the participants in this study had stories to tell that reflect on identity. For the religious sisters, this was often to do with authority. For example, Mary struggled to obey rules, particularly when those rules seem silly or inefficient. Ellen also spoke about identity, of being 'unformed' when she first approached the nuns. Hannah lacked the confidence to teach Australian History to Year twelve students because she had done her teaching training in Ireland and she was not familiar with the examination system in Australia. Margaret revered Dr.

Mannix, as if he was a film star and she was so excited to meet him, because he was Irish and every St. Patrick's Day was a big celebration in Melbourne while Dr. Mannix was alive.

CURRICULUM AND THE CLASSROOM

The nuns were prepared to spend extra time after school hours working with the more academic students, who were training to get scholarships to secondary school. Margaret states: 'When I was teaching I kept the scholarship class back after school to do extra teaching until five o'clock'. It was important that the good students were given a chance to get scholarships to a secondary school, as they could not afford to pay the fees, so she gave them extra tuition. Mary also did the same thing staying back at school after the students had left to do extra work. She also worked with the students on Saturdays, spending extra time with them doing rehearsals for a performance in a play.

The nuns were given jobs to do and they just did them even though they were not prepared for the job. In Margaret and Mary's cases, they went on to become principals of schools at the age of twenty-six. Mary says: 'I was principal for a number of years at two different schools'. It seems it was just another job and she was asked to do it and she would not refuse. The practice of obedience was so ingrained that it overcame hesitations about knowledge, skills or experience. For these women, the personal, professional, and community experiences were interwoven, and often inseparable.

In reference to discipline, Margaret says: 'I never had a problem. I just reported any bad behaviour to the mother of the child and everything was fine then'.

Margaret states that she was an authoritarian teacher, and a woman who accepted and worked within existing hierarchies. This type of discipline may

have worked because it depended on the child's fear of the parent, fear of her, or perhaps depended on the child being shamed for being in trouble. Then again it could be that Margaret was effectively working in partnership with the parent, who shared respect for the teacher because she was a nun. In one area she states that the children were difficult to manage because it was a rough area and it was tough teaching Grades five and six at that school. (Other nuns commented on Margaret, and stated that she was very strict with the students and they did not get away with anything. The children were afraid of her.

However, her discipline in the classroom worked. There is a philosophical basis to her understanding of what she was doing. I believe her vocation has now blended with her life as a teacher and it is all missionary work. Margaret believed that she was doing things for a reason. She says: 'I also prepared them for life. I taught the boys how to do woodwork, by first learning it myself from a book and then I taught it to the boys at school, so that they could work as carpenters in the local town'. She was employing applied learning long before the term was introduced. Her teaching was not child-centred in general, yet the child was her focus. The woodwork story is also interesting in that it indicates the degree of power the teacher had in the classroom to decide what should be done and when it should be done.

Margaret used the motto 'if you see a need do something about it', from the foundress of her order, Mary MacKillop, and she used this idea to get the boys motivated and interested in making useful things with their hands. I believe she was very good at fixing things around the convent and she would try anything. She may have enjoyed doing this work herself and she thought it would be useful as craftwork for boys, to keep them busy. She knew which boys were academically minded and which were hands-on and practical in their approach

to life. A significant part of her professional experience, involved her in sorting out her students into different learning groups, and designing curriculum to meet their needs. These boys went on to the technical school (in Morwell) to train as carpenters. They completed their first lot of training from a nun at a primary school, which probably stimulated initial interest for them in doing carpentry as a trade. Margaret reflected that her influence on the boys was very important as she has set them up with an interest in carpentry for life. She valued her contribution to their lives.

During the periods of the stories, it was the practice that school examiners or inspectors came to assess the teaching in classrooms. Margaret was very confident that her teaching was excellent. Towards the end of her life, when I interviewed her, she presented herself as a very independent woman who showed no fear of authority. However, she did not question this authority either. Margaret knew her place in the world, and she knew the places of others and how best to prepare them for that place.

Mary inspired her students with a love of reading by reading a few chapters to the students in class and then asking them to go to the library to borrow the book to read for themselves. She also worked with the scholarship class, staying back until five o'clock in the evening after teaching all day in order to help them with their studies.

Hannah taught history and geography from a book, keeping ahead of the class by a couple of chapters. Then gradually more resources were introduced and the students did project work. With the introduction of inquiry based learning followed by the use of computers, the students were able to do their own learning with the teacher acting as facilitator in computer rooms.

Ellen focused on teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, making sure that all children could do so before leaving school, as she believed that then they were set up for life. She did lots of spelling tests and maths tables in preparation for the inspector, who came once a year.

There was a change in the curriculum with the introduction of sport and exercise in schools. Margaret mentioned marching as a sport - light exercises and teaching the students to follow instructions rather than playing the sport and being involved, as we think of sport now. Computers were introduced in schools in the 1980s and the students learned to play computer games, a new teaching tool in the classroom.

There was very little change in the curriculum in all that time, as far as Mary can remember. She just went on teaching. Perhaps it was monotonous, unchallenging and repetitive, doing the same thing over and over without any interaction from the students. For much of this time inquiry was non-existent in schools; there was no need for it because content transfer was quicker and all you needed. Students did not need to learn to think and analyse, they just needed to remember information; the dates for history, measurement for maths; that was passed on to them. There was in their world a finite amount of knowledge which was passed on to students by rote learning with a test or examination at the end. Many students left school at age fourteen or whenever they finished primary school.

VATICAN II: BEING CATHOLIC, FEMALE AND A TEACHER

Vatican II was a major change within Catholic practice and the participants commented on how it impacted on themselves. Vatican II brought many changes especially with the gradual introduction of lay teachers to the schools. Mary identifies the biggest change of all in Vatican II - that it asked individual Catholics to be responsible for their relationship with God - but they weren't equipped to do it, and it required a huge mind shift. Vatican II made no difference to Margaret or to Mary and they did things just like they had done for years. Some of the older nuns carried on as before as they did not like change. They were used to following rules and having certain people in charge, the authoritarian approach. This approach carried into Margaret's classes as it was how she did her teaching. The changes introduced through Vatican II therefore had significant effects into the professional lives of teachers as well their personal and spiritual lives.

What did change mean for these older nuns? Did it mean losing identity? Risking their souls? Was it taking away all the premises on which they had built their lives, which they had willingly succumbed to, even though it felt wrong in some cases, because this was what vocation was – and now – they are asked to change again? This was too much for many of the older nuns and they kept their old ways and they did not change, even wearing the heavy habits as they had done for years. They had become institutionalised, following a set of rules and a daily routine for most of their lives and now they were given freedom without direction. Margaret states: 'We, as nuns, were not used to having free time to do as we pleased', so some were confused by their new independence and they did not like the changes brought about by Vatican II.

Mary remarked that after Vatican II, 'subsequently I did a whole year in Christ College but also we had very little by way of staff development or anything along the way, so my professional experience is very limited'. Perhaps this was because staff development was secondary to being a nun, or secondary to being a Catholic. Ironically it was as a result of Vatican II that Mary could go home and also leave the order. The single greatest change in her life was not one to do with her as a teacher, or as a Catholic, but as a person.

Mary believes that she had a calling to be a nun – her vocation; then she was on the missions - her place; and later came her task - as a teacher. This was how she summed up her life. Most of the women interviewed, described their experience of reading 'The Far East', and the stories of the Irish priests, brothers and nuns working in foreign lands 'on the missions'. For some, reading this book developed the idea of doing the same thing, when they grew up. Back in the 1930s, 40s, 50s and 60s there was the perception of Ireland as the centre of Catholicism and it was a great place for recruits for the missions abroad. This mindset created the sense of vocation that many Catholic children, certainly the women interviewed for this study, carried with them through life.

Many sudden and significant changes were coming into the Catholic Church, especially the reading of the Mass in the vernacular, more involvement in the Mass by lay people such as doing the readings and saying the prayers of the faithful, and the change where the priest would now face the people, while saying Mass. The biggest change of all from Vatican II was that individual Catholics were now responsible for their own relationship with God. Most people were not equipped to do this – lay or religious. It required a huge mind shift and significant re-education.

In reference to other stories from the nuns, it appears that the older nuns were not happy with the Vatican II changes, which meant that they did not have their routine of prayers in the evening as before. Now they had to organize their own prayer time and they were not used to this new independence. The nuns now became involved in parish work and they held meetings with parents of school children about the sacraments in the evening. This meant that more nuns were now not in the convent in the evening for prayer time as they had more freedom to come and go as their work required. They were also given the freedom to wear comfortable clothes which were appropriate for the Australian climate and they wore a cross on the collar of their dress to identify them as nuns.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter 6, are reflections from the participants on their professional experiences as Irish, Catholic women teachers, both lay and religious, who taught various students at different levels in Catholic schools throughout Victoria, Australia, during the period from 1930 to 1980.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS / REFLECTIONS

To be Irish, female, Catholic and a teacher does not immediately conjure images of boldness or daring, and yet each of the stories is a story of a bold adventure, a journey in faith into the unknown.

I shared many aspects of my life story with the women I interviewed: a family in rural Ireland and the sense of family enterprise working on the farm; the desire to break free from the conventions of life in Ireland; an education in a small rural school, where family relationships and peer interaction were replicated in the classroom; where the choice was marriage or religion; an overriding sense of Irishness in our education; and a deep commitment to God through Catholicism.

It was easy for me to connect with the women I interviewed. A cup of tea, a biscuit, a shared accent, and a brief introduction of myself was all that was needed, in most cases, to win their confidence. We had shared experiences of a past that was held in the mists of Ireland, but we also had shared experiences of bright light and strong heat. The shared past of rural village life in Ireland, and the surprise of change, were the most striking experiences over which our bonds were forged.

Most of my participants came from similar farming backgrounds and many of them had felt pressured to marry, hearing more than once, the question: ‘when are you getting married?’ (McKenna, 2006).

These participants saw what life was like for their mothers – farming mothers in the first half of the twentieth century had difficult lives, beset by hard work, many children, economic concerns, poverty, cold, and relentless caring – for children, men, parents and animals. Some of my participants chose not to marry – and

in Ireland in the mid twentieth century, this left only two options – ostracism or religious life (Clear, 2007). Some of my participants acknowledge that they became nuns because it was an easier option, or so they thought at the time. The other option was to stay single and be called a ‘spinster’. It was much better to become a nun as nuns were revered (McGuinness, 2013) in Ireland and in many Catholic families throughout the world, just like the priests and brothers. People looked up to them and they were put on a pedestal as special.

As a fifteen or sixteen year old it was a wonderful adventure to prepare and take off to Australia, with older nuns looking after you along the way, and meeting different priests and brothers as well as nuns from different orders. There was adventure, excitement and status in going off to become missionaries in a foreign country and stopping at various ports to discover the world. In the journey narratives these women tell, there is a strong sense of going around the world to a myriad of different countries and meeting (and helping) the natives. One woman tells of having a Christmas party with the people from the island of Goa and how they came on board the ship to celebrate Mass with them. Imagine the sense of freedom at such a young age!

Then when they arrived in Melbourne or Sydney, as some of the women did, they were met by more Irish nuns and they did not have to worry about getting accommodation for the night or about buying food or even about having money or getting a job. This life was much more appealing to these women than working hard on a farm in rural Ireland in all kinds of weather, trying to make ends meet.

The ways that my participants were taught was reflected in the ways they themselves taught. Peer teaching was used around Ireland in rural schools like my own, where the students learned from each other as we went.

This was how my participants taught in Victorian schools on their arrival in Australia. Their teaching was modelled on their own learning methods. Some of the nuns that I interviewed were thrown in at the deep end with very little training and very few resources, very similar to the type of schooling they had experienced in Ireland. These teachers just did their best and they did not complain. After all they were supposed to be 'on the missions' and they more or less had to accept things as they were. The lack of resources in Catholic schools in Victoria was a big problem. Here there is an example of perhaps the attitude or belief that 'God will provide' if you have faith. Some of these women/nuns went into country towns in Victoria in pairs to establish Catholic schools in the community. They started with one room, just like their predecessor Mary MacKillop did when she started her school. These Irish women were true pioneers, doing things in the spirit of adventure. They relied heavily on the Catholic parishioners in these communities to supply them with food and provisions in order to keep going. Often the nuns would visit families and babysit in order to give the parents a break. These communities liked having the Irish nuns, perhaps because they were of Irish descent themselves so they had an affinity with everything Irish. One woman said in her story that the parents wanted to have Irish teachers teach their children, that 'they liked the Irish teachers'. Perhaps it was their sense of humour that they liked or their story-telling! This 'making do' attitude is admirable, but it is also very telling. These women moved in a world that was both hierarchical and patriarchal. As women 'on the missions' their voice had effectively been silenced. Their work was undervalued and under-resourced. One of the questions underlying the participants' stories is why they tolerated this? Some of the participants seemed powerless to change these conditions, indeed, even to question them. Others saw the conditions as something they had effectively 'signed up to'. It is only

after Vatican II was fully implemented, and on reflection, that these women appear to have been empowered to critique the circumstances of their employment (and sometimes exploitation).

The nexus of faith and experience is critical in understanding the participants. How far is faith something that connects these women? Did they all have the sacramental experiences in primary school? At the time when these women lived in Ireland, more people attended weekly Mass than at any other time in Ireland's history (Brown, 2004). Ireland was the most Catholic country in the world. Attendance at Mass, participation in the sacraments of the church was central to Irish culture and identity. For me, as researcher, this raised the question: Where do the personal and professional intersect? Is being a teacher a vocation? The idea of the mission drove these women, and was inseparable from the idea of immigration. During this period, an Irish diaspora was established and extended. Dr Mannix was central to the Irish diaspora in Melbourne, and more widely, in Australia. Following on the heels of Mannix was the initiative of Vatican II. Within all of this are the powers of gender and patriarchy and the ways in which these determine the lives of individuals.

Faith played a very important part in the lives of these women that I interviewed. It was at the centre of their world. Yes I believe that my experience of the sacraments in primary school was the same for the women I interviewed as all the sacraments were carried out at a certain age in all Catholic parishes in Ireland. We all learned from the same Catholic Catechism in Ireland. Then when these women came to teach in Victoria they used the same traditional methods in teaching the sacramental programs to children in Victorian Catholic schools as they themselves were taught, and they carried out the sacraments at

the same age as they did in Ireland because most of the Catholic parishes in Victoria back then were managed by Irish priests.

Many of the women, whom I interviewed, especially the nuns, had met Archbishop Mannix and all of them revered him. They thought it was a wonderful experience for them as they were young women at the time. I think for some of them it was the highlight of their life as a nun, it meant so much to them, almost like meeting a film star or pop singer. Dr. Mannix was certainly held in high regard by the Irish Catholics in Victoria. The personal became the professional when these women as teachers in Victorian schools carried on the Catholic tradition of preparing the students for the sacraments, which were then performed by Catholic priests.

According to the Webster Dictionary (1995, p. 1105), the word vocation means 'a stated or regular occupation; a calling'. I think being a teacher is both a 'regular occupation' and a 'calling', because not everyone is cut out to be a teacher and not everyone would like to be a teacher; for a start you need lots of patience with children. But did these women that I interviewed have a 'calling' to go 'on the missions' to a different country where they could teach children (like Irish children but a different race) the same traditional Catholic beliefs and sacraments which they themselves were taught? In this way they were spreading the Good News of the Gospel writers and propagating the faith in these countries. They might see the chance to leave Ireland as a type of 'freedom' where they would not be recognised and they could do things though limited by the rules of the convent, for those who became nuns. These same nuns, on the other hand went in pairs into the Victorian bush by themselves to establish new Catholic primary schools with very few resources and school buildings in very bad condition. Some schools had holes in the windows, which

were freezing in winter for teachers and students. They were the true pioneers and they seem to have no fear of going to new places and trying it out and making it work. This was a form of remarkable faith in themselves and the religious order that they represented. One of the nuns whom I interviewed said that they did not think about doing things 'they just did it'. When she was asked to take up a job as principal in a remote country school, she just did it, even though she was only twenty-six years old with no management skills or 'how to deal with people' skills, and no knowledge of country life in Victoria. As she said she just learned as she went, a type of 'on the job training'. They always seemed to work hard, teaching large numbers of fifty or sixty in a class and yet they did not have any discipline problems. The reason for this might be that people in general, children included, were scared of the nuns in their dark coloured habits and their big noisy beads tied around their waist. (I know that I was afraid of them in secondary school. I did not have nuns in my primary school). However, it is also possible that some of these women look back on their time as teachers with a certain nostalgia. It is evident from the interviews that, as these women aged; they became more aware of the depth and breadth of sacrifice they had made. Perhaps in this context it is hard to acknowledge difficulties in the job itself, in the relationships it entailed.

There was a sense of ritual and identity in all the celebrations that took place and most of those celebrations involved going to church in some way. These women from my interviews would have similar celebrations where they came from because these celebrations were special events in the spiritual life of each child. The Irish are well known for their hospitality and this is part of the Celtic spirituality which is embedded in their blood. They also love to go visiting others

in their neighbourhood, whether they live in the town or in the country, and they love to talk and tell stories, some of them might be tall stories at times.

Acknowledging faith was a way of life. Everything was bound together by faith. Only now as I write this have I come to realise what an important part faith played in my life and the lives of the women whom I interviewed. Even the Irish language, Gaeilge, has its greetings based on religion, for example, when we say, 'Hello', it is 'Dia dhuit' translated means 'God be with you'. The reply is 'Dia is Muire dhuit', which means 'God and Mary be with you'. I always remember my father on entering a neighbour's house, he would lift his cap off his head and say, 'God bless all here' and when he was leaving the house he would say, 'God Bless' as well. Some Irish people still say that on the phone, just before they hang up.

Margaret was my oldest participant and her professional life covered several decades. At the end of our conversation she said: 'I had a very worthwhile and rewarding life as a nun and a teacher and I tried to have a positive influence on my students. I did what I was asked to do in the circumstances and I made the best of all the many different experiences in all the different schools that I taught in and I encouraged my students to believe that: Nothing is impossible, just believe in yourself'.

As women, as Catholics and as teachers, each of my participants did as Margaret advised. It was faith, above all else, that informed their professional experience. To believe in God and in self makes all things possible.

This study focussed on:

1. Investigating how Irish women teachers influenced and experienced education in Catholic schools in Victoria during the period 1930 to 1980.

In this research I have investigated how Irish women teachers by their teaching and their management of Catholic schools in Victoria during the period 1930 to 1980, have influenced and experienced the education of large numbers of children, who were mainly Catholic.

2. Considering the influence of Irish Catholic women on education in Catholic schools in Victoria in the context of social and economic change.

During this period from 1930 to 1980 there were some important social and economic changes occurring in Australia and throughout the world, including The Great Depression, which caused unemployment in many cities and towns. This brought much hardship to families who struggled to survive from day to day. Following The Great Depression came World War II and this created a new problem as many of the men enlisted in the army and they travelled overseas to fight in the Western Front and other places. The women had to take over running the communities and they found work in order to care for their families while the men were involved with war. When the war finished the men returned home and they went back to work and the women left their jobs and stayed home to look after their families as they did before the war began. After World War II there was an influx of migrants to Australia from war-torn Europe and the Eastern Bloc and this caused an overcrowding of children in schools. The

participants in this study experienced these challenges in their schools and they stated repeatedly that the parish priest would not turn any child away.

3. Examining changes in the conditions of women teachers in Catholic schools through this fifty-year period in Victoria.

In Catholic schools around Victoria the nuns were managing the schools and hiring Catholic teachers as the teachers were responsible for preparing the students for the Holy Sacraments, such sacraments as Confession (now known as Reconciliation), Holy Communion and Confirmation. The first two sacraments were administered by the parish priest and Confirmation was administered by a Bishop or Archbishop. The teaching staff in Catholic schools consisted mainly of nuns with a few single lay Catholic women. During the period of this study there was an understanding in Catholic schools, that when a lay woman got married, she would leave her job as a teacher. This was the case with the lay teachers in this study; they stayed home to look after their children. As time went on there were changes made where the teachers returned to teaching when their children started school.

4. Exploring the perception of Catholic education in Australia as articulated by Irish Catholic women teachers

According to the participants in this study, there were very few resources in Catholic schools as teaching was on the whole carried out with a 'talk and chalk' methodology during the period 1930 to 1980. One of the participants stated that she stayed back at the end of her teaching day, to write the lessons for the following day on the blackboard, which she filled without a space. Another participant taught herself woodwork in order to teach the boys woodwork, a skill that would be useful when they left school. When the Catholic schools received

government funding and grants the wages were increased in Catholic schools and the nuns employed more lay teachers in their schools. There was a need for this as the numbers of nuns joining the Religious Orders declined after Vatican II, because as one stated, they were given more freedom and some nuns left the order permanently

As a consequence, the objectives of the research were to:

1. Collect evidence through the use of unstructured interviews, with Irish Catholic women teachers about their professional experience as teachers in Victoria from 1930 to 1980

This research study focused on 'The professional experience of Irish Catholic women teachers in Victoria from 1930 to 1980'. The research is a collection of stories and oral histories derived from interviews with Irish Catholic women, who were teachers in Victoria during this period: 1930 to 1980.

This research was an attempt to explore an historical reality – the immigration of Irish women to teach in Catholic schools in Australia – and to give voice to those who were involved. It subscribes to a feminist epistemology that values the stories of the women involved in the historical experience (Campion, 1997), above the patriarchal recording of this history. The role of women in all areas of society has been overlooked compared to the role of men. This is particularly important when the majority of these women were operating within the overtly patriarchal, and at times misogynistic, institution of the Catholic Church (Macdonald et al. 1999; Campion, 1982).

As I interviewed all twenty-two former teachers, I attempted to understand the uniqueness of each of the participants and respect the sincerity of their approaches for the study. From these twenty-two stories, four were explicitly

developed into narratives. These stories explained how the participants managed to teach in difficult conditions with large classes of students and very few resources, while maintaining the faith and developing their own identities as women and teachers. These stories were recorded through the means of 'unstructured interviews' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) usually in participants' homes in Australia or in convents in Ireland.

2. Identify patterns of experience that correlate with the participants' experiences of teaching in Victoria, Australia

The research explored the feelings and emotions recalled by twenty-two women who told their stories. My study was qualitative research. Denzin & Lincoln (2000, p.8) point out that 'the word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency.' Researchers using qualitative research methods emphasize 'the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000 p.8). This study was very much concerned with processes: the processes of travel and transition, of changing identity and of lived experiences. This research captured 'the individual's point of view, examining the constraints of everyday life and securing thick descriptions' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.10). As the researcher, I made use of first-person accounts, life histories, historical narratives, ethnographic prose, and biographical and autobiographical materials. My engagement as researcher with the research was inherently personal. My own story prompted this work, coming as I did from Ireland as a young woman in 1975, to teach in Queensland. Over many years I became aware of myself as part of a much larger story of

immigration, education and cultural significance. This prompted my interest in the stories of others, over several decades, and to a desire to understand the ways in which individual female Irish teachers made meaning from their choices and the choices made for them.

3. Interpret the issues/themes that will emerge from the evidence collected through interviews and research

This study investigated how Irish women teachers experienced education in Catholic schools in Victoria in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, discipline, culture and in other ways. Chapter 2 provided a review of the historical backgrounds and contexts of the participants in this study particularly as they relate to Ireland, Rome and Australia.

LIMITS OF THE STUDY

This research has concentrated on the professional experience of Irish Catholic women teachers in Catholic schools in Victoria from 1930 to 1980. Some of these women were religious sisters and some were lay women. The fifty year time span was chosen in order to explore the shifts in experiences from a period when there were only religious sisters teaching in Catholic schools to a time when, due to a decline in the number of religious sisters, lay women (or in some cases men) took over teaching in, and running, Catholic schools in the 1970s and beyond.

As the study was concerned with the experiences of individuals, it was a qualitative study, with the purpose of understanding how individual experiences could guide us to a richer understanding of a cultural collective. The inquiry was focused on professional experiences and the ways that these assist us as readers in the twentieth-first century to build knowledge of educational

processes and experiences and the role of individuals in the construction of the education system as it exists in Victoria today. Students of these teachers were not interviewed, as this would have shifted the focus from the professional experiences of the teachers to the learning experiences of the students. This study focussed on Irish Catholic women teaching in Victorian schools from 1930 to 1980.

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APPENDIX ONE

This table offers a summary of the participants' backgrounds and professional experiences.

name	Rural/city	Age when interviewed	Age at coming to Australia	Parents' occupations/	Position in the family	Teacher qualifications	Lay or religious/religious order	Primary or Secondary experience	Stated motivation for coming to Australia
Norah	rural	62	35	farmers	eldest	Primary	Lay	P	adventure
Hannah*	rural	65	24	farmers	eldest	Secondary	Lay	S	adventure
Kathleen	city	64	24	teachers	middle	Secondary + primary	lay	P + S	Sunshine, better quality of life
Mary*	country Town	68	15	Public service	Third eldest	Primary + secondary	Ex-nun Brigidines	P + S	missions
Anne	Country town	66	15		eldest	Primary + secondary+ tertiary	Religious Brigidines	P + S + T	missions
Elizabeth	town	75	21			Primary	Religious Josephite	P	missions
Angela	town	76	23			Primary	Religious Presentation	P	missions
Ellen*	rural	86	18	farmers	middle	Primary	Religious Josephite	P	Missions/adventure
Josephine	rural	64	17	farmers	Second eldest	Primary	Religious Josephite	P	missions
Teresa	rural	66	17	farmers	eldest	Primary	Religious	P	adventure

							Josephite		
Rosemary	rural	58	17	farmers	eldest	Primary	Religious Josephite	P	Adventure/help
Irene	rural	57	16	farmers		Primary	Religious Josephite	P	missions
Eileen	rural	78	18	farmers	eldest	Primary +sec	Religious Josephite	P + S	To do God's work
Brenda	rural	67	15	farmers	eldest	Primary	Religious Josephite	P	missions
Bridget	town	86	17	teacher	eldest	Primary	Religious Josephite	P	Missions/adventure
Patricia	rural	78	20	farmers	eldest	Primary	Religious Josephite	P	missions
Pauline	rural	57	16	farmers		Primary	Religious Josephite	P	missions
Bernadette	rural	92	16	farmers	eldest	Primary	Religious Presentation	P	missions
Barbara	town	91	15			Primary	Religious Presentation	P	Missionary teacher
Catherine	town	66	19		Only child	Primary+ secondary	Religious Brigidines	P + S	adventure
Margaret*	rural	88	20	farmers	eldest	Primary	Religious Josephite	P	missions
Geraldine	rural	72	15	farmers		Primary	Religious Josephite	P	missions

APPENDIX TWO

Questions for the interview

The following questions act as a springboard for eliciting information from my participants in semi-structured life history interviews:

Using a tape-recorder, I started with the question 'I am here to learn about your experiences of being a teacher in a Catholic school in Victoria. Can you tell me about that experience?' Another open ended question was 'How did you approach discipline in your role as a teacher?'

1. What motivated you to come to Australia?
2. Was it for a better lifestyle, adventure, career, a need for teachers? (This was a prompt if further information was needed).
3. What year did you come?
4. What were the teaching requirements/qualifications for teaching in Australia?
5. Did you need a passport and visa?
6. Did anybody sponsor you/contact with someone in Australia?
7. Did you have an interview before you left for Australia?
8. What was your journey like? (on ship/plane).

9. Do you remember who was with you on ship/plane?

10. On arrival in Australia did anyone meet you at the airport/docks?

The conversation then moved into 'professional' elements of teaching, such as discipline, curriculum, class sizes and resources or lack thereof. A few participants went into great detail describing their journey to Australia by ship and the wonderful adventure they experienced.